DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 082 CS 509 176

TITLE	Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (78th, Washington, DC, August 9-12, 1995). Newspaper Division.
INSTITUTION	Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.
PUB DATE	Aug 95
NOTE	462p.; For other sections of these proceedings, see CS 509 173-187 and CS 509 196. Babcock and Wilson paper may not reproduce clearly because of Light type; Riffe and Johnson paper have some broken type.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC19 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Editors; Higher Education; *Journalism; Mass Media Effects; Mass Media Role; *Newspapers; *News Reporting; *News Writing; Politics; Publicity; Public Opinion
IDENTIFIERS	*Journalists; Media Bias; Media Coverage; News Bias; Newspaper Graphics; *News Sources

ABSTRACT

The newspaper section of the Proceedings contains the following 18 papers: "The Role of Headlines and Nut Graphs in Helping Readers Learn from News Stories" (Glen L. Bleske); "Daily Newspaper Reporters' Views of Journalistic Roles: An Integrated Perspective" (Dan Berkowitz and James TerKeurst); "'Cohen V. Cowles Media': Has the Court Decision Affected Journalistic Practices?" (William A. Babcock and Sherrie Wilson); "The Relationship of Copy Desk Leader Behaviors to Job Stress, Hardiness and Health Factors in Copy Editors" (Betsy B. Cook and others); "How Journalists at Monopoly Dailies View Newspaper Competition" (David C. Coulson); "Rules for Getting Real: How One Newspaper's Editors Talk about 'Real People'" (David A. Craig); "Comparing Questionnaire Formats in Accuracy Studies" (Julie E. Dodd and others); "Segmenting the Electorate by Media Use Types: The Value of Newspapers in Local Election Campaigns" (Arthur G. Emig and Jill Millspaugh); "The Political Dance: A Test of Agenda-Setting Effects in the 1994 Texas Gubernatorial Election" (Dixie Evatt and Tamara Bell); "Computer-Assisted News Reporting Tools: A Study of Daily Newspaper Use in 1994" (Bruce Garrison); "The Bias of Visual Appeal in the Selection of General Excellence Winners in Newspaper Contests" (George Albert Gladney); "Where Americans Really Get Their News" (Thomas Hargrove and Guido H. Stempel III); "Ideological Manipulation via Newspaper Accounts of Political Conflict: A Cross-National Comparative News Analysis of the 1991 Moscow Coup" (Li-Ning Huang and Katherine C. McAdams); "Help Wanted: The Adoption of Personal Advertisements by the Daily Press" (Debra L. Merskin and Thomas J. Herling); "Unnamed Sources in White House Coverage" (Daniel Riffe and Gail Johnson); "Inability to Recognize News Source Bias and Perceptions of Media Bias" (Donna Rouner and others); "Newspapers and Public Opinion. An Examination of 'The Des Moines Register' and Its Iowa Poll" (Craig W. Trumbo); and "Intercity Competition and Local Election Coverage: A Case Study" (James B. White). (CR)

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THE ROLE OF HEADLINES AND NUT GRAPHS IN HELPING READERS LEARN FROM NEWS STORIES

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Manuscript presented to the Newspaper Division,
Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication,
Washington, D.C., August 1995

ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF HEADLINES AND NUT GRAPHS IN HELPING READERS LEARN FROM NEWS STORIES

Headlines are conceptualized as texts that prepare readers for processing information in a news story. A controlled, 2X2 repeated measures experiment was used to test what 56 student subjects remembered from a series of eight news stories. Headlines varied at two levels: Abstract headline vs. Concrete by Traditional headline vs. Nut Graph. The dependent variable, Memory, was based on a multiple-choice questionnaire. Findings: 1) Headlines do help or hinder reader learning; 2) concrete headlines are better than abstract ones; and 3) nut-graph summaries, if well-written, can improve reader learning.

THE ROLE OF HEADLINES AND NUT GRAPHS IN HELPING READERS LEARN FROM NEWS STORIES

Headlines are handy tools for newspaper readers. Just about any editing textbook will sing about the benefits of a well-written headline. Headlines have long been considered an important part of the newspaper package.

Typically, discussions of headlines conceptualize them as serving basic functions of allowing the reader to easily scan a page for news and attracting the reader to a story (Baskette, Sissor, & Brooks, 1986). The purpose of this present study is to conceptualize news headlines in a different way: as texts that prepare readers for processing information in the story, pre-texts that may help the reader understand the news and learn from the news story.

The principal question for this study is whether headlines help readers learn from news stories.

Nut-graph Headlines

Recent design changes in U.S. newspapers have called for providing increased amounts of information in headlines (Hilliard, 1991). One of the recent innovations is called the "nut-graph" headline: a deck headline that is more like a piece of body copy (Hilliard, 1991; Garcia, 1987).

Traditionally, a nut graph referred to a paragraph, placed early in a news story, that summarized the important details of the news. Editors judged the nut graph to be an integral link between the beginning and the main body of the story. A nut-graph headline, therefore, contains essential details from the main story and serves as a link between a headline and the lead of the news story.

The nut-graph headline often is produced in larger type size than body copy but is smaller than the main headline type size and is often in contrasting or complementary typographical style. It usually is wedged between a main headline and the body copy. Dozens of newspapers, including many metropolitan dailies such as the

Los Angeles Times, The Raleigh News and Observer and the Philadelphia Inquirer, are using nut-graph headlines as part of their designs.

As does the typical deck headline seen in most U.S. newspapers, the nut-graph headline summarizes key information from the story and works with the main headline to communicate a story's meaning (see Figure 1 for a comparison of headline styles). Unlike the traditional headline style that calls for elliptical and compressed language, the nut-graph headline uses multiple, complete sentences and standard punctuation.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Hilliard (1991) found that nut-graph headlines were highly accepted by about 70% of readers of one Washington state newspaper. The readers reported that the new form of headline helped them understand the context of the story. Hilliard called for further testing of the effects of headline content on readers and questioned whether the added headline space taken up by the nut-graph headline was a good use of the space.

In light of recent attempts by the industry to develop an electronic newspaper (Christopher, 1994; Morton, 1993), headlines and nut-graph summaries may be even more important than they are for a traditional newspaper. To make it easier for readers to enter the newspaper, section fronts of the electronic newspaper are being designed so that they feature headlines and summary paragraphs (Christopher, 1994). Under this design, a reader would then have an option to select the complete story. Questions about the style and content of headlines and summaries, which may serve as electronic gates for the reader of the future, are questions that should be answered.

Therefore, a secondary question for this paper is whether nut-graph headlines help readers learn from news stories better than traditional headlines help. A third question of this study will consider a common wisdom in the field: Are concrete words in headlines better for learning than words that are more vague and general?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on Headlines. Research on the effects of newspaper headlines has been mixed, and there have been only a few studies. In 1953, Tannebaum complained that almost no research had investigated the psychological effects of headlines. In 1963, other researchers (MacLean, & Kao) noted that although the effects of page design and headline typeface had been subjects of extensive research, the effects of headline content on newspaper readers had undergone little analysis. In 1991, Hilliard found that little had changed since 1963: the psychological effects of newspaper headlines remained an unknown factor.

Yet, the overall evidence suggests that headlines do play an important role in readers' information processing. For example, headlines can affect attitudes. Headlines that emphasized "bad war news" during World War II were more effective in instigating a positive attitude toward participation in the war effort (Allport & Lepkin, 1943) than were headlines with positive news. One early study (Deutschmann, 1956) found that headlines serve as cues for readers as they seek interesting stories. Headlines attract attention or guide selection, but they also influence decoding of the message, according to Tannebaum (1955), who reported in 1953 that the positive or negative slant of headlines affected how readers judged the guilt or innocence of an accused criminal in a news story.

In a similar experiment measuring how readers respond to headlines that contain innuendo about a person, a sociology study (Wegner, Wenzlaff, Kerker, & Beattie, 1981) found that subjects rated the protagonist more positively when the headline was neutral, while they rated the person in a negative way when the headline contained innuendo or incrimination. But a study by Leventhal and Gray (1991) found that innuendos in headlines had no effect on memory or attitudes toward a crime victim, the accused, or the criminal's sentencing. But, it appears that the sensational story topics--rape and abuse--may have skewed the memory tests.

Contrary to Leventhal and Gray (1991), Pasternack (1987) found that libelous statements in a headline and story led people to judge a man more likely to be a thief. In comparing the effects of libel in the story or in the headline, Pasternack found that the libelous headline showed a greater effect in increasing judgments of guilt. In discussing his results, Pasternack (1987) made an important point: In the real world, headlines may be even more important than text because readers often will look only at a headline, skipping the story or skimming it. Such superficial attention to the headline is likely to increase the effect of the headline.

In investigating the negative effects of ethnic references in crime reporting, Winkel (1990) found evidence that after reading a series of 40 headlines, subjects were more likely to overestimate the number of crimes committed by an ethnic group other than the one to which the subject belonged. Winkel (1990) suggested that headline readers used information in headlines to make generalizations about behavior of ethnic group members, with the readers forming stereotypical judgments about a group of people based on the negative characteristic emphasized in the headline.

Headlines are so powerful that the topic of the summary has a greater affect than the slant in forming readers' attitudes toward a candidate (Geer, & Kahn, 1993). Geer and Kahn suggested that this "surprising" amount of influence may be due to readers' attitudes being primed by certain topics. Headlines, they said, may guide readers' choosing certain information to encode. Thus, headlines affect what people learn.

Overall, research on newspaper headlines supports the idea that headlines have an effect on readers. Winship and Allport (1943) appeared to be right when they argued that newspaper headlines create images in the minds of readers and these images have important psychological effects on readers.

Process of Reading a Headline. To study how readers process headlines, Perfetti, Beverly, Bell, Rodgers, and Faux (1987) completed six experiments to test whether textual space constraints imposed on headlines affected the comprehension process. The researchers noted that the Spartan approach to headline content--the omission of verbs and articles in headlines--created syntax that challenged a reader to interpret the meaning. They hypothesized that instead of parsing headlines as if a headline were a sentence, a reader would heavily favor problem-solving techniques while processing a headline.

By using a series of ambiguous headlines, the researchers (Perfetti et al., 1987) found that subjects parsed headlines in the same way that they comprehend other written language. Overall, headline comprehension was very difficult, and yet readers could not overcome their reading habits to use shortcuts or other knowledge even when those other strategies would have been an advantage. Ambiguous headlines took longer to read not because there were multiple meanings to choose from but because it took longer to achieve any meaning. Readers looked at syntactic structure first rather than semantic plausibility.

Reading Research. The consensus of reading research is that any device that prepares readers for new material will increase the probability that the readers will be able to later produce the new information (Kulhavy, Schwartz, & Peterson, 1986). For this study, headlines are conceptualized as being a form of pre-reading, or an advance organizer (AO). Ausubel (1960) conceptualized AOs as pre-reading events that appear to help readers use background information they already hold. These organizers bridge the gap between what the reader already knows and what the reader needs to know. Information in the AO becomes an anchoring post or scaffolding for ideas that will come later (Ausubel, 1963).

A series of studies by Mayer (1989, 1987, 1984, 1983, 1980, 1979) support Ausubel's theory and expand the concept of advance organizers to concrete material such as graphic devices. It may be possible that, besides attracting reader attention to stories, headlines may be bridges, text organizers that help readers process the news. Nut-graph headlines, by providing more information about key points in a story, may provide a more complete scaffolding for readers, improving comprehension.

Mayer and Bromage (1980) defined an AO as a stimulus presented before learning that contains a system for logically organizing the incoming information. Unlike the typical AO, which can be several paragraphs long, the typical headline is severely restricted by its role in the newspaper to being just a few words, a short summary of the text. The extended summaries provided in a nut-graph headline should produce an increase in the effect of headlines on reader learning.

For the present study, it is useful to consider studies of texts other than newspaper stories. Titles (in textbooks, for example), like headlines, are descriptive labels or organizational frames to much larger chunks of information. Investigations of the effects of titles have clearly shown that they help readers understand ambiguous text (Bransford & Johnson, 1972). Headings used to subdivide a textbook chapter also were found to aid readers' recall (Krug, George, Hannon & Glover, 1989; Hartley & Trueman, 1985).

Overall, the evidence suggests that under many situations, titles and headlines affect readers as they engage a text. Based on the evidence, it is probable that the style and content of newspaper headlines will affect reader comprehension of a news story.

Concrete and abstract language. The command is clear: copy editors at newspapers should write headlines with action verbs and specific nouns (Baskette et al., 1986). Effective headlines are concrete, according to the common wisdom of the newspaper business.

Ausubel (1963), however, argued that pre-readings should be presented at an abstract level to increase comprehension. Other researchers (Corkill, Bruning, &

Glover, 1988; Mayer, 1979) have disagreed and found evidence that concrete organizers can increase comprehension. AOs appear to work best when they do not follow Ausubel's prescription that the AO should be abstract (Corkill et al, 1988).

The purpose of AOs is to provide relevant information that provides anchors for ideas that are familiar to the reader (Ausubel, 1963), which suggested to many researchers (e.g. Corkill et al. 1988; Mayer 1984; Spiegel, 1976) that concrete organizers should be more effective than abstract organizers. For example, a high level of abstraction might confuse readers who would not easily integrate the new information with the old (Spiegel, 1976).

Research supports the value of concreteness to memory. Paivio (1986, 1971) has shown that when subjects were presented concrete and abstract information, they judged the concrete information to be more familiar, and they were more likely to recall the information. To explain his findings, Paivio (1986, 1971) hypothesized that imagery was an important component of the meaning of language that was concrete. Imagery aroused by a sentence can be used as a context for determining what a sentence is about. Paivio's conceptual peg hypothesis (1971) stated that concrete words functioned as pegs from which other words hung and that high-imagery words were powerful retrieval clues for associated information. Imagery was a chunking mechanism that helps recall (Paivio, 1986, 1971).

Measuring learning. Comprehension of a text is needed before learning takes place. Typically, it is expected that if a reader has encoded and stored information and can retrieve it, the text was comprehended. Typical measurements are summaries of the text, recall of details, recognition of details, inference making, and selecting main ideas.

Mayer's theory of assimilation (1987, 1980, 1979) differentiates between rote memorization and assimilation. To bring about different types of encoding, either the reader or text can be manipulated. Mayer explained that AOs build external connections between the reader's prior knowledge and the text, integrating incoming information with the reader's existing knowledge. Advanced information about the text to be read can lead to improved performance on tasks associated with learning while decreasing overall verbatim recall of details (Mayer, 1987, 1979). To measure the effects of headlines, this present study will use recognition of main ideas from a text.

Theory. Underlying the theoretical work of Mayer and Ausubel in promoting advance organizers as learning devices is the need to explain how organizers work. Ausubel (1963) tied his ideas of cognitive functions to Bartlett's ideas (1932) that "schema," a mental frame based on prior knowledge, was an organizing structure.

The positive effects of various text features on reader recall have been explained through schema theory (e.g., Beck et al, 1991). Dole, Valencia, Greer, and Wardrop (1991, p. 144) have declared that the effect of schema theory on understanding reading comprehension "has been nothing short of revolutionary." Schema, according to various scholars, suggests that what a reader stores in memory is determined by a type of encoding process that is similar to a knowledge frame (Alba & Hasher, 1983). This frame selects or even alters a person's experience so that the representation of the experience that is stored makes sense and is consistent with other experiences. Schema activates a reader's prior knowledge, which aids interpretation of new information (Alba & Hasher, 1983). Generally, schema refers to the general knowledge that a person holds about a subject matter, event, or experience.

This present study draws on various theoretical perspectives to build its hypotheses. A basic assumption is the idea that text features, the environment, and individual characteristics combine to influence understanding of a text. This present study concerns itself with one basic theoretical question: How do pretext messages--in this case, headlines--interact with a text to increase understanding?

Numerous studies show that students learn more from text plus illustrations than from text alone (Mayer, 1989). In developing a theory for headlines, it is useful to note that headlines are similar to illustrations. In fact, Waller (1979) developed the concept of "access structures" to describe the spatial and typographic cues that helped readers access and read text. Those structures include illustrations, headlines, summaries, boxed materials, and even different typographic settings. Headlines appear to be a specific case of a general example of message processing.

Hypotheses. The present study uses repeated measures and random assignment to control for environmental and individual differences and to focus on the effects of headlines. Further, the design will call for control of various message variables known to influence learning--length, topic, order--and for control of prior knowledge that individuals bring to the experiments. Theory leads to the following hypotheses:

H1) Subjects will recall significantly more information from a news story with a nut-graph headline than a traditional headline.

The content of a headline, which is like a title or an advanced organizer, should affect, prime or prepare a reader to learn from a news story. A headline should provide a reader with a schema for the story and make processing of the information easier.

Integration of the story into long-term memory is dependent on many factors, especially those related to the content of the headline, which provides material for the reader to organize. A nut-graph headline contains more relevant information than a traditional headline, which by definition is a Spartan summary of a news story. This added information helps a reader organize new information and it provides a richer schematic frame for integration. The effects of increasing information in the headline can be measured by comparing aided recall scores for subjects who read stories with both types of headlines.

H2) Subjects will recall significantly more information when given a concrete headline than an abstract headline.

The imagery of the words in the headline also can affect the organization and integration of new material to be learned. Images provide conceptual pegs that aid recall (Paivio, 1971) so that a headline with strong imagery increases the memorability of the news story held in long-term memory.

METHODS

The aim of this experiment was to determine whether style and content of a headline made a difference in readers' learning from the story that followed the headline. This experiment was a 2X2 (level of concreteness X headline style) repeated measures factorial design. The differences in headlines are the main independent variables. They varied according to two factors, style (traditional and nut-graph) and content (abstract and concrete).

Subjects and sampling. The subjects, 56 total, were volunteers from the subject pool at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Journalism and Mass Communication. The average age of subjects was 20.5 years old. Nearly 70% were women, and 87.5% were white, 8.9% African- American and less than 4% other races. Participants received credit in their journalism classes for participating.

Materials. The materials included a set of eight news stories, each supplied with four headlines. Also included was a questionnaire with 40 multiple-choice questions and demographic questions.

An effort was made to make the news stories and headlines consistent with the real world of newspapers. Eight stimuli news stories were selected from the local news sections of the Portland Oregonian (see Appendix). The selection of the stimuli stories was not random. The stories were published during the first two weeks of October 1992, which was chosen because of the upcoming election. About 40 stories were selected from this time period based on their content. The main attributes were that the story have information that was unfamiliar to students, that the stories have information that was learnable (such as election stories), and that the stories be of adequate length, about 200-300 words.

Story topics were chosen that focused on issues of low involvement that were unique to Oregon. This geographic limitation was designed as a control for the prior knowledge that a typical college student would have about the information that would be tested in the memory questions. Government action and elections were considered desirable stories for the experiment because their content is strongly associated with the type of information provided by newspapers that is suitable for reader learning. On the other hand, feature stories, editorials, and other types of entertainment content (such as sports) were considered to be beyond the scope of this study.

The 40 stories were reduced to eight stories. The main criterion for reduction was based on the qualitative judgment of the experimenter, who decided whether a story could generate an adequate number of meaningful questions for the memory test. Multiple stories were chosen to reduce the chance that the observed effect was due to an idiosyncrasy of a single story. The stories selected were the fish story, the Hispanic story, the water story, the sign story, the campaign story, the hospital story, the parking story, and the grass story.

Three experts judged that the stories represented typical news stories. Each judge received the eight stories plus 12 other distracter stories and judged them on a scale of 0-10, with 10 signifying that the story represented the kind of story that is typically printed in a newspaper. Each of the stories used in this experiment rated a perfect 10, while many of the distracter stories varied in score. For example, a selection of fiction rated 0. Two recent Associated Press stories also rated perfect 10s.

The news stories were printed to look as if they were photocopies of real news stories. The headlines were printed above the stories. The main head was 30-point type and the nut-graph headlines were 16-point.

Each of the eight stories received four headlines, one for each of the conditions: traditional-concrete, traditional-abstract, nut graph-concrete, nut graph-abstract. To assure that the headlines were abstract or concrete, three judges, all professional journalists, were asked to rate the headlines on a 1 to 7 bi-polar scale, with 7 being strongly concrete and 1 being strongly abstract. The concrete heads all averaged above 5.6 and most were in the plus 6 range. Only one problem headline was noted and it was rewritten to make it less concrete and more abstract. The other abstract headlines all ranged between 1 and 3. To maintain validity in the Style factor, the nut-graph headline had the same main head as the traditional headline. In other words, the differences between the nut-graph and traditional headlines were focused only in the additional material presented by the "nut graph" itself.

To balance the possible effects of story order and stimuli repetition, eight story packets were prepared. The order of stories in each packet was based on Wagenaar's (1969) method for constructing N X N "digram balanced" Latin Squares (See Table 1). The packets were designed as a between-subject manipulation. This control-manipulation was designed to balance potential topic, order, and repetition effects, which were tested in a post-hoc analysis.

Insert Table 1 about here

General directions for the experiment informed subjects that they would read a series of news stories, and that after reading the news stories they would be asked about what they read. The directions emphasized that they should read the news stories carefully, but at a normal speed.

Measurement. A questionnaire, also on 8 1/2 by 11-inch sheets of paper, included 40 multiple-choice questions. (five for each story), while the last page asked subjects about basic demographic data: age, gender, race.

A series of 64 questions (eight per story) were written. Each question focused on important information central to the stories, which was confirmed through a pre-test of the questionnaire. There was one correct answer for each question: To eliminate ambiguity, the answer was an exact or nearly exact passage from the text. Three plausible alternatives--both semantically and structurally different from the correct answer--were constructed for each question. A fourth alternative (to discourage guessing) was "I am not sure or I do not remember."

The questions and stimuli were pretested by a group of seven subjects, all from the volunteer subject pool. Questions that were answered correctly or wrongly by more than five people were discarded or rewritten as needed to reach the goal of 40 questions for the experiment.

The 40 chosen questions were carefully constructed to capture those ideas that were related to the major concepts of the stories. Mayer (1989, pp. 48-49) noted that valid major dependent variables in experiments designed to measure learning "must involve recall of conceptual information, retention of material in verbatim format, and/or creative problem-solving transfer performance rather than the more traditional measures of overall amount recalled and/or overall performance on comprehension tests."

To assure that the 40 questions did reflect important concepts in the stories, five judges, taken from the volunteer subject pool, read each of the eight stories and then rated the 40 questions along with 20 additional questions for their importance to the story. A bi-polar 7-point scale (Not Important Idea vs. Important Idea) was used. None of the 20 additional questions was rated as more important than the 40 used in this experiment. The lowest score among the questions used was 3.75, slightly below the middle score of 4, while the highest score for the questions not chosen was 3.25.

Another pre-test was used to assure the validity of the questionnaire. A group of three judges, all professional journalists, read each of the headlines and the questionnaire to determine whether any headline provided an answer to any of the questions. The judges determined that none of the headlines provided information that helped answer the questionnaire, except for one, which was rewritten. The judges also noted that they had no prior knowledge that helped them to answer the questions.

During the experiment, each subject answered all 40 questions, and the reliability score for the 40 questions was Alpha = .83.

Procedure. Each subject received eight news stories to read. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the eight stimuli packets. Instructions emphasized that the subjects were to read the stories as if they were carefully reading a newspaper. Subjects were told that after reading the stories they would be asked some questions about what they remembered about the stories.

Subjects also were told that they had a 45-minute time limit in reading the stories (this time limit was determined by the pretest). A time limit was necessary because studies have shown that by slowing reading speed, comprehension increases (Kintsch & Vipond, 1979). The goal was to have the subjects read carefully, but at a normal rate of speed.

After reading the stories, the subjects returned their stimuli packets to the experimenter. The average reading time was about 28 minutes. Subjects were then given a questionnaire to complete. The questionnaires were marked so that the experimenter knew which of the eight stimuli packets the subject received, but subjects remained anonymous.

Data analysis. The dependent variable, Memory, was based on the number of correct answers to the multiple- choice questions. Each subject contributed a score from 0 to 10 for each cell of the 2X2. Repeated measures ANOVA, controlling for the subject effect, was used to determine if the subjects remember significantly more key ideas from stories with concrete, nut-graph headlines as opposed to abstract or traditional headlines. The conventional significance level of .05 was used.

To take into account the effects of story order and repetition, a 2X2X2X8 mixed measures design was used. Story packet was a between subjects factor, while Time, Style, and Content were repeated measures.

RESULTS

This experiment tested whether style and content of a headline made a difference in readers' learning from the story that followed the headline.

In a 2X2 repeated measures design (Abstract vs. Concrete by Traditional vs. Nut Graph), the dependent variable, Memory, is based on the number of correct answers to five multiple-choice questions for each story. The scores were summed for each condition so that the range of scores contributed to each of the four cells is 0 to 10 for each subject.

The experiment was designed to allow a post-hoc analysis of effects that might be due to story order and the repetition of the treatments. A Latin Square design was used to control for these effects. This analysis was a 2X2X2X8 mixed measures design (Time 1 vs. Time 2 by Abstract vs. Concrete by Traditional vs. Nut Graph by Story Packet). Story Packet was a between-subjects factor with eight levels, while Time, Content, and Style were repeated measure factors with two levels each.

No violations of the assumptions for a repeated measures ANOVA were found.

Main analysis. The mean scores and standard deviations for each of the four cells in the 2X2 design are reported in Table 2. The Abstract Nut-Graph cell had a mean memory score of 4.71, while the Concrete Nut Graph had a mean of 5.70. The Abstract Traditional headline had a mean of 5.29, while the Concrete Traditional headline had a mean of 5.30.

Insert Tables 2, 3 about here

There was no significant main effect for the style of a headline, traditional or nut graph ($F(1,55) = 0.23$; $MS_e = 1.94$; $p > .63$). There was a significant main effect for the content of the headline, abstract or concrete ($F(1,55) = 5.70$; $MS_e = 2.45$; $p < .03$). The interaction of style and content, however, also was significant ($F(1,55) = 4.94$; $MS_e = 2.64$; $p < .04$).

The interaction effect of style and content is illustrated in Figure 3 and the summary of the sums of squares analysis is listed in Table 3.

Insert Figure 3 about here

To aid interpretation of the interaction, an analysis of the simple main effects was performed (Kirk, 1982). Two sets of One Way ANOVAs were performed, each with a significance level of .025.

At the level of content (Abstract vs. Concrete), there was no significant effect for traditional headlines. For nut-graph headlines at the level of content, the difference in means was significant ($F(1,55) = 10.23$; $MS_e = 2.64$; $p < .01$). At the level of style, neither the difference between the abstract headlines nor the difference between the concrete headlines was significant.

Order effects. There were no main effects for time or story order. Among the interactions, two were significant: the interaction of Time by Style ($F(1,48) = 15.31$; $MS_e = 0.980$; $p < .001$), and the three-way interaction of Time by Content by Story Packet ($F(7,48) = 3.74$; $MS_e = 1.12$; $p < .01$).

The simple main effects of the interactions were analyzed. Figure 4 illustrates the Time by Style interaction. At Time 1, the Abstract Nut-Graph Headline was significantly different from the Abstract Traditional headline, while at Time 2 the Concrete Nut Graph is significantly different from the Concrete Traditional headlines.

Insert Figure 4 about here

From the figure, an intuitive interpretation of the interaction is possible. At Time 1, the difference between the Traditional and Nut-Graph headlines was greater than at Time 2 when the headlines were abstract, with the Traditional headline having higher memory scores. But when the headlines were concrete, the nut-graph scores increased significantly at Time 2.

This interpretation suggests that when readers are faced with multiple stories, the increased amount of concrete information in the nut graph becomes more valuable as more stories are read. In contrast with Traditional headlines, the lack of information, whether abstract or concrete, makes it more difficult to remember the stories.

The three-way interaction among Time, Content, and Story Packet required 48 tests of simple main effects and none of the three significant effects led to a meaningful analysis.

Neither of the two interactions discussed in this section appears to raise concerns about biased results due to order or repetition effects. Instead, the two-way . interaction (Style by Time) adds a level of understanding to the role of the nut-graph headline, which appears to gain value as the number of stories read increases.

Of course, it may be possible that the time effects found in the two interactions are due to subjects' being sensitized to the manipulated changes in headline style and content. Considering the data and the results, however, it appears unlikely that the results of the main analysis have been systematically biased by the effects of story order or repetition.

Discussion. Null Hypothesis 1 cannot be rejected: A Nut-Graph headline did not increase memory for a news story when compared with a Traditional headline. But this finding must be tempered by the interaction of Style and Content.

Null Hypothesis 2 can be rejected: Concrete headlines significantly improved recall from a news story when compared with Abstract headlines. But this finding, too, must be interpreted in light of the interaction.

In this experiment, the interaction can be intuitively understood. It seems that because the Traditional headline contained Spartan information, it did not matter in the memory scores of the subjects whether the headline was abstract or concrete. But when a Nut-Graph headline was used, more information was provided to the reader. An increase in abstract information appeared to confuse the reader or hinder memory, while an increase in concrete information, as typified by the Concrete Nut-Graph headline, appeared to help readers' memories. Further, based on the interaction of time and style, it appears that the value of the nut-graph headline to reader memory increases as the number of stories read increases.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The study considered whether reader comprehension increased when the content of the headline was concrete rather than abstract and when the style of the headline was a nut-graph rather than traditional. Underlying this consideration was a much broader question: Do headlines help readers learn from news stories?

Hypothesis 1 was not supported. There was no significant difference between memory scores for Traditional and Nut-Graph headlines (headline style). Hypothesis 2 was supported. There was a significant difference between memory scores for concrete and abstract headlines (headline content). The interaction, however, of headline content and style also was significant. Analysis of simple main effects suggested that concrete headlines were more effective in aiding memory when combined with nut-graph headlines, while abstract headlines were less effective in aiding memory when combined with nut-graph headlines.

The implications are clear:

1) Headlines do much more than guide reader selection and make news pages attractive. Headlines affect reader learning. This is a new finding and it emphasizes the importance of headlines in news packages.

2) As common sense suggests, concrete language in headlines is an important key to reader learning. But even more significant is what happens when a headline is abstract: readers appear to be confused and learning suffers.

3) Finally, the nut-graph headline, if clearly written, is a superior form of headline. It can enhance reader learning. Based on the findings, it appears that newspapers should consider an increased emphasis on headline writing. Page designs that increase the role of headlines should be considered and adopted.

Headlines and theory. The study of headlines in journalism has been mainly atheoretical, concerned with practical applications of headline writing and their role in the news package. Other disciplines, however, have looked to titles and advance organizers as devices that help readers learn material and comprehend text. This study contradicts Ausubel's (1963) argument that pre-readings should be presented at an abstract level to increase comprehension. Instead this study supports the work of other researchers (Corkill, Bruning, & Glover, 1988; Mayer, 1979) who have evidence that concrete organizers can increase comprehension. Underlying this evidence is the theoretical work of Paivio (1986, 1971), who has argued that concrete words help readers form images about the text they read and that imagery is a foundation for meaning in language.

The experiment provides support to the idea that headlines with concrete words are more memorable. This finding can be explained by Paivio's theory (1986, 1971) that imagery can be used as a context for determining what a sentence means because concrete words function as pegs from which other words hang. Paivio's dual coding theory (1986, 1971) stated that behavior was mediated by two independent, parallel, but partly interconnected cognitive systems: an image system specialized for dealing with information about nonverbal objects and events, and a verbal system specialized for dealing with linguistic information.

The analysis of repetition effects (the concrete nut-graph headline appeared more valuable as the reader increased the number of stories to be processed) suggests that the imagery value of the concrete headline is a product of a parallel processing system, or at least an imagery system that produces a mental model that the reader uses to encode, store, and retrieve information. The mental trace of the information in the news story appears to be strongest when the headline is concrete and is a nut graph, which may be due to the imagery value of the concrete words in the headlines.

From this study, it is possible to sketch a theory for newspaper headlines. A headline has typographic prominence and placement above a story and provides strong cues for cognitive processes. An effective headline provides a way of organizing the concepts that a reader needs to understand a news story. This organization occurs in short-term memory, where material is made available from the senses to be integrated with prior knowledge held in long-term memory. The effective headline helps the reader integrate concepts from the news story and a schematic model is formed while reading the headline. The headline provides the reader with material for building a schematic model that is relevant to the text.

A nut-graph headline that has concrete information helps a reader organize new information, and it provides a richer schematic frame for integration. But, when the nut-graph headline is filled with abstract information, integration is more difficult, probably because of reader confusion.

Much of this study echoes well-known professional heuristics about headlines. Concrete words have long been a journalistic goal in headline writing. This study provides evidence that concrete words do make a difference. Previous research (Perfetti, Beverly, Bell, Rodgers, & Faux, 1987) suggested that normal headlines written in Spartan language were difficult to process. Newspapers, if they want to fight declining readership, should want to make headlines reader-friendly.

Of course, from a newspaper perspective it is silly to measure memory for a news story with an abstract headline. Editors would say that they already strive to write good headlines. But this study goes further and suggests that headlines should contain increased amounts of information. The nut-graph headline combined with concrete words appears to be a good way to help readers process news stories. It appears worthwhile to devote more news hole to headline space, as many newspapers recently have decided to do by adopting nut-graph headlines.

In light of recent attempts by the industry to develop an electronic newspaper (Christopher, 1994; Morton, 1993), the value of the nut-graph headline supports the idea of using news summaries and headlines on section fronts of an electronic newspaper as entry points for readers. This study suggests that headline summaries of news when combined with traditional headlines help readers organize information.

Limitations. This study has major limitations. First is the challenge to validity created by the laboratory setting, which focused a subject's attention on the stimuli. Second is the nature of the stimuli, which, despite efforts to make the stories and headlines look and read as real newspaper stories, have low ecological validity when compared with a real newspaper.

The third major limitation is the use of student subjects, who are very different from the average newspaper reader. This limitation restricts generalization of the results to a population of college students at our university . Future studies--in the field using real newspapers--may yield interesting results.

The fourth major limitation rests on the sample of messages. Although multiple messages were used to limit the possibility that an idiosyncrasy of any one message was responsible for the results (Jackson, 1992), the message sample was not random nor was it designed to be representative of newspaper content.

Other limitations affect the understanding of the results. There may be idiosyncracies in the messages, or the manipulations, or the subjects that led to the positive and negative results reported in this study. For example, the headlines used may be more effective than the typical headline used in a newspaper, or the content of the news stories may be a critical factor in bringing about the reported effects.

Future studies. As newspapers move toward their electronic futures, the role of headlines and nut-graph summaries may become more important as readers are faced with an increased number of messages. Further studies of headlines could isolate other content features of the nut-graph summaries that might make them more effective in helping readers learn.

New questions also arose from this study. The unexpected role of repetition in interactions with style suggests that readers faced with multiple messages are affected by mental fatigue or increased mental workloads while processing the news stories. Newspapers contain dozens of messages a day, and the new electronic newspapers promise to multiply the number of messages available to the average reader. The current study suggests that the positive effect of concrete, nut-graph headlines increased as the number of messages read increased. Further studies could isolate this effect and provide guidelines for making better newspapers.

Final summary. This study supports the general idea, echoed in many of the studies involving headlines: Readers take cues from headlines. Readers use headline information to access their knowledge about the news story and then use that prior knowledge as a frame for integrating new information in the story. Simply put, this study supports the idea expressed by Winship and Allport (1943) that newspaper headlines create images in the minds of readers and these images have important psychological effects on readers.

Table 1

Latin Square Design for Experiment

Topic Order (A through H) and
Condition (A=abstract; C=concrete; N=nut graph; T=traditional)

Reading order Packet	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
1	A C/N	B C/T	C A/N	D A/T	E C/N	F C/T	G A/N	H A/T
2	B A/T	D A/N	A C/T	F C/N	C A/T	H A/N	E C/T	G C/N
3	C C/N	A C/T	E A/N	B A/T	G C/N	D C/T	H A/N	F A/T
4	D A/T	F A/N	B C/T	H C/N	A A/T	G A/N	C C/T	E C/N
5	E A/T	C A/N	G C/T	A C/N	H A/T	B A/N	F C/T	D C/N
6	F C/N	H C/T	D A/N	G A/T	B C/N	E C/T	A A/N	C A/T
7	G A/T	E A/N	H C/T	C C/N	F A/T	A A/N	D C/T	B C/N
8	H C/N	G C/T	F A/N	E A/T	D C/N	C C/T	B A/N	A A/T

A = Hispanic Story
B = Hospital Story
C = Sign Story
D = Fishing Story
E = Parking Story
F = Water Story
G = Grass Story
H = Campaign Story

Table 2

The Effect of Style and Content on Memory Scores for News Stories

	Abstract	Concrete	TOTAL
Traditional Headline	5.29 (sd=2.27) n=56	5.30 (sd=2.16) n=56	5.29
Nut-Graph Headline	4.71 (sd=2.11) n=56	5.70 (sd=2.10) n=56	5.21
TOTAL	5.00	5.50	5.25

Table 3

Sums of Squares for the Effect of Style and Content on Memory Scores for News Stories

SOURCE	DF	SS	MS	MS_e	F	PROB
Subject	55	640.00	11.64			
Content	1	14.00	14.00	2.45	5.70	0.02
Style	1	0.45	0.45	1.94	0.23	0.63
Format X Style	1	13.02	13.02	2.64	4.94	0.03
Subject X Content	55	135.00	2.45			
Subject X Style	55	106.55	1.94			
Subject X Content X Style	55	144.98	2.64			
Model	223	1054.00	4.73			

Traditional Headline

204 secret
atom blasts
admitted

Traditional Headline with Subhead

204 secret
atom blasts
admitted
Cold War revelations
include human tests

Traditional Headline with Nut Graph

204 secret
atom blasts
admitted
The energy department begins
new era of openness. It tells
story of 800 radiation tests
on humans, some of whom
were unaware of the risks.

Figure 1: Types of headlines

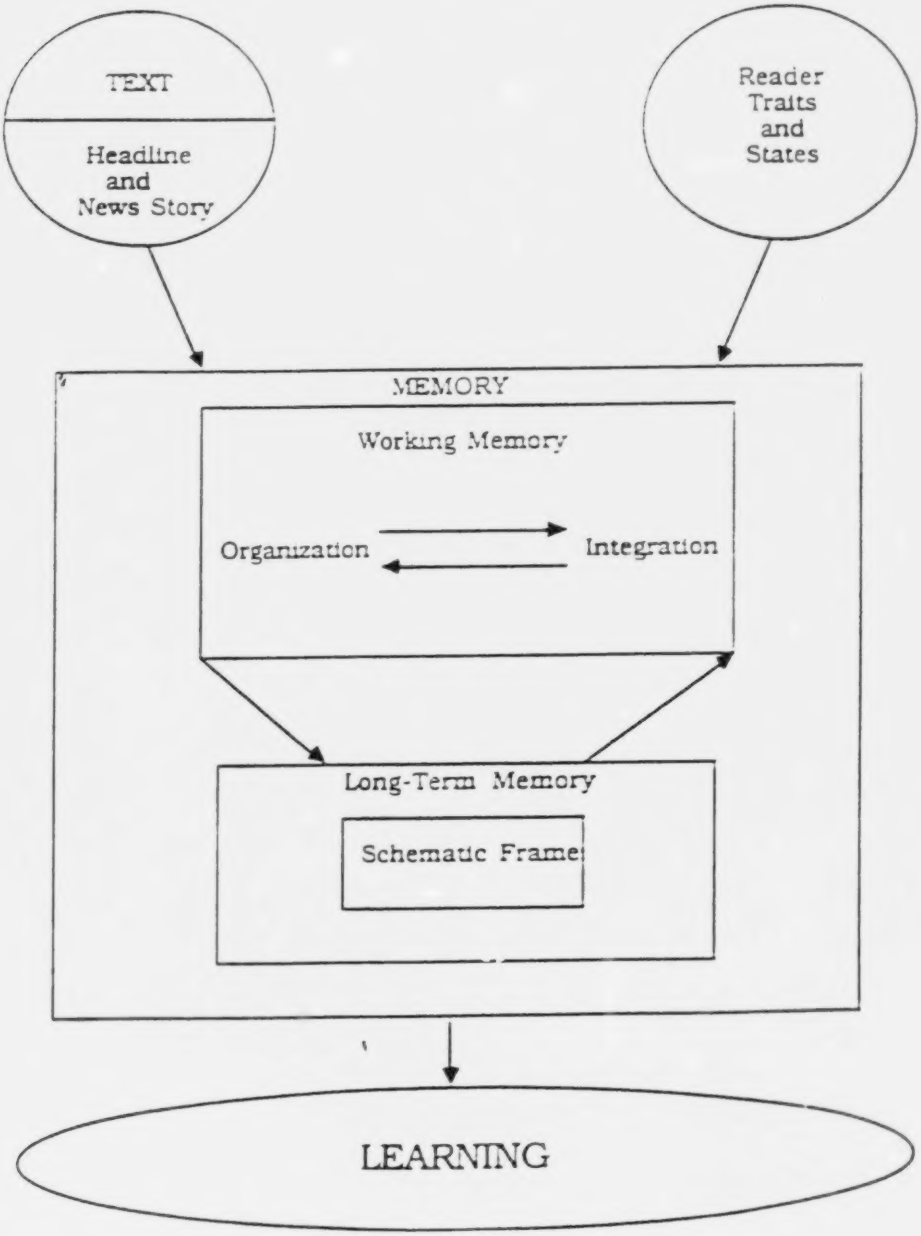

TEXT
Headline and News Story
Reader Traits and States
MEMORY
Working Memory
Organization
Integration
Long-Term Memory
Schematic Frame
LEARNING

Figure 2: Theoretical model of headline processing

Figure 3: Interaction of Style and Content on Reader Memory

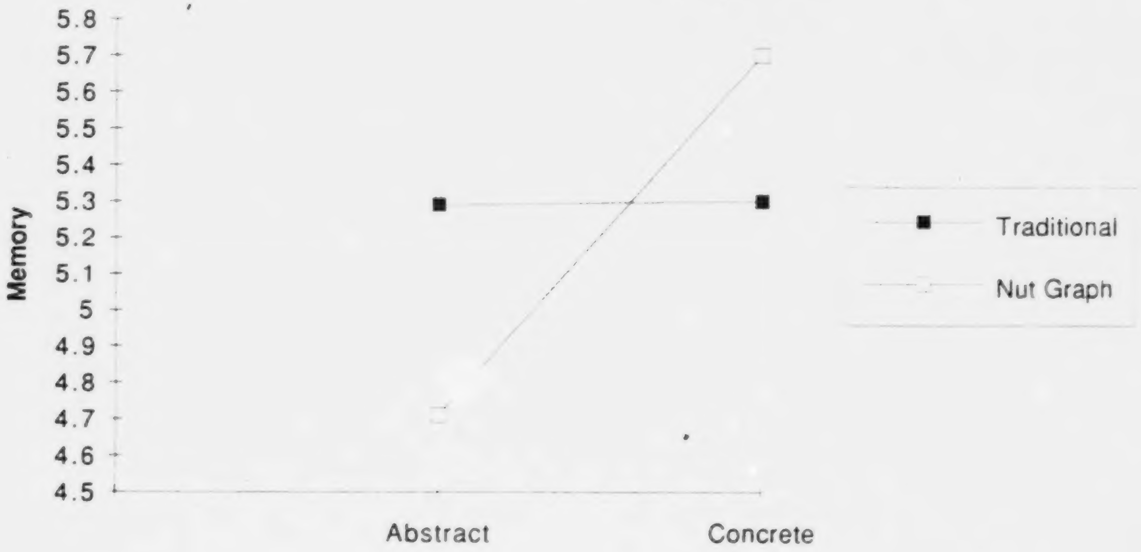
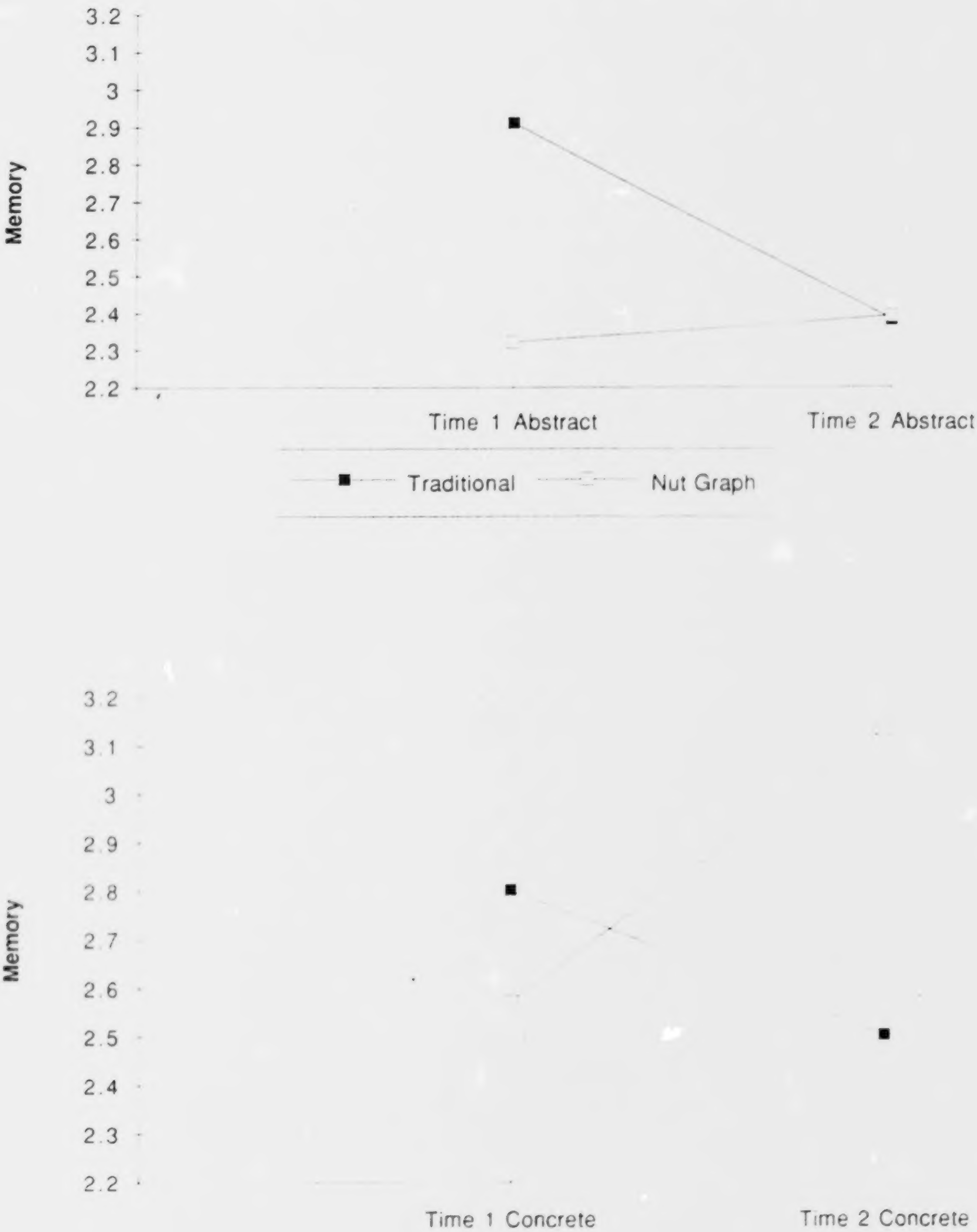


Figure 4: Interaction of Time and Style on Reader Memory



DAILY NEWSPAPER REPORTERS' VIEWS OF JOURNALISTIC ROLES: AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE

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Daily Newspaper Reporters' Views Of Journalistic Roles: An Integrated Perspective

The relationship between reporters and the people they interview for information -- news sources -- is often viewed as a major factor shaping the news. Some studies portray journalists as society's watchdogs over government and big business, while others argue that journalists are pawns of the powerful. Yet other studies depict the journalist-source relationship as give-and-take, where each party is engaged in an exchange of influence and information.

The way reporters view their social role has a lot to do with how they interact with news sources. For example, a reporter subscribing to watchdog press values would often take an "adversarial role" with news sources (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). In contrast, a reporter who believed in more of an "information dissemination role" would act more as a conduit for the information provided by news sources.

However, by studying journalist-source relationships only in terms of the adversarial, interpretive/investigative, and information dissemination roles a study misses the greater context of a reporter's social environment. Further, these roles have emerged from studies that have surveyed an amalgam of journalists: broadcast and print media, reporters and editors, elite media organizations and ordinary ones. The relationship of findings from these data to the bulk of U.S. newspapers is unclear.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the three common journalistic roles within their broader social environment. In addition, it focuses solely on reporters working at community daily newspapers. The paper integrates these reporters' views of basic journalistic roles with their views of four additional social forces: peer expectations, organizational demands, community pressures, and the news sources themselves. Data for this study come from a survey of reporters working at 14 daily newspapers in one midwestern state. Cluster analysis is used to identify a typology of journalists' role beliefs within their larger social context, and to paint a portrait of the background characteristics of reporters who subscribe to those beliefs.

Relevant Literature

Within the field of mass communication, the work of journalists has frequently been framed within their social position as "The Fourth Estate." Beliefs accompanying this framing include values such as fairness, objectivity, and a position as watchdog over government and business. As a result, studies of journalists role perceptions frequently center on these values. Role perceptions can be defined as the expected types of behavior people think they are supposed to exhibit in their social setting (Drew, 1972).

The earlier studies of journalists' role perceptions suggested that the journalistic role could be divided into either a "neutral" or "participant" type (Drechsel, 1983). The neutral role has been defined as the neutral-reporter type who puts the burden of creating news and news judgment on others. The participant role is more independent in their news judgment and will use social concerns in considering newsworthiness. This dichotomy was challenged by findings that three role types are more likely and that journalists often enact more than one role, depending on their situation. These three roles include the interpretive, dissemination, and adversarial (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). The interpretative role is similar to the earlier participant role while the disseminator role values getting news quickly to the widest possible audience. The adversarial role is defined as an "adversarial mindset" or watchdog approach.

These three roles tend to appear in particular contexts. In general, print journalists tend to favor the interpretive role more than do broadcast journalists. Reporters generally favor either the interpretive or adversarial, while editors lean toward disseminator roles. Reporters with greater experience and working at prestigious media organizations are also more likely to adopt the interpretive or adversarial roles. The dissemination role is more common among broadcasters and editors.

Clearly, journalistic roles appear to be context related, and many of the conditions that lead to role variation are outside the realm of daily newspapers. It is therefore likely that this body of literature does not accurately describe the role perceptions of reporters working for those kinds of newspapers. It is also likely that daily newspaper reporters do not diverge as widely in their role perceptions as do the broader range of journalists appearing in large-scale survey research.

Studies of newswork suggest that this mismatch of the journalistic role perception literature to an understanding of daily newspaper reports goes even deeper. Although early research such as White's (1950) classic gatekeeping study emphasized the individuality of journalists, much of the research that has followed has recognized that cooperative behavior is both common and productive for journalists (Dunwoody, 1978). Journalists thus base their actions in part on how their colleagues do their work, and on what seem to be socially acceptable boundaries for reporting and interacting with news sources (Bantz, 1985; Berkowitz, 1992a; Tunstall, 1971). A shared sense of news judgment and values, combined with the competitive nature of newswork, can be interpreted as a form of socialization by journalists seeking increased status for their roles (Erlich, 1992).

The organizational constraints and demands faced by journalists also bring demands which temper core journalistic values. Although many journalists do not feel influenced by their organization, some journalists acknowledge that institutional evolution, the altering of norms, and changing roles affect the writing of news (Darnton, 1990). Research on organizations has found that publishers' policy on particular subjects is usually followed by the journalists they employ (Breed, 1955). In situations where these are brought into question, journalists use the ritual of objectivity as a strategy to organize unexpected events and decrease variability (Berkowitz, 1992b; Tuchman, 1973). Because of this, some researchers have come to view the newsroom as a type of factory and concluded that financial pressures on news organizations lead to work routines that rarely allow the time or personnel necessary for interpretive or adversarial roles (Bantz, McCorkle & Baade, 1980; McManus, 1994).

The recognition of financial constraints and economics has led some to consider that journalistic education, hiring practices, and social conformity contribute to journalists general support of mercantile interests (Altschull, 1995; Molotch and Lester, 1981). Thus whether resulting from organizational or economic concerns, the effect of news organizations can be considered relatively strong (Tichenor, Olien, Donohue & Hindman, 1993).

Journalists' role perceptions are further shaped by their interactive role within the community they cover. Although some studies argue that journalists adjust their role just to live within a community (Sohn, 1984), others see the journalist's role affected by the larger relationship between the media organization, large scale structural characteristics of the audience community and long term social change (McLeod, Sandstrom, Olien, Donohue & Tichenor, 1990). For example, media market size has been linked to differences in media content (Carroll, 1989). Journalists also tend to reify a community's social power structure and to base their reporting activities on what they come to see as a natural social order (Galtung & Ruge, 1981; Gitlin, 1980; Soloski, 1989; Tuchman, 1978). The power dynamic does extend both ways however.

Basic journalistic information dissemination has been found to overcome structural relationships in communities. Community leaders frequently believe in the agenda setting ability of the media, and try to avoid conflict in media coverage (Donohue, Olien & Tichenor, 1989; Kanervo and Kanervo, 1989). A community's degree of pluralism (or degree of power base centrality) is related to journalists' abilities to report on views outside of the dominant ones (Coleman, 1994; Donohue et. al., 1989). In more homogeneous communities, reporters are sharply constrained from taking on an adversarial role that would threaten the status quo.

Yet another factor tempering variability of journalistic roles is the necessity of maintaining a relationship with news sources. Forces within the media organization make newswork a strategic practice that leads journalists into a reliance on predictable, routine sources (Berkowitz & Adams, 1990; Brown, Bybee, Weardon & Straughan, 1987; Drechsel, 1983; Sigal, 1986). The status of a journalist relative to that of a news source also limits journalistic role possibilities (Dyer & Neyman, 1977; Reese, 1991).

This power imbalance is quite likely for reporters at community newspapers because of the differences between reporters and their news sources. In general, the age distribution of reporters is skewed, so that most are under 40 years of age and few are much older (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986). Reporters also tend to relatively mobile in their careers, especially when they are younger. At the same time, news sources tend to be public officials who have spent most of their lives in a community and have reached their positions only after a significant number of years.

A typical encounter between a reporter from a daily newspaper and a local official or business leader would thus involve a person who is a relative outsider to the community (yet who is bound by his or her newspaper's community interests) interviewing a news source who is steeped in the community power structure. Clearly, other than a disseminator role would be difficult in this situation (Chibnall, 1981). Further compounding this imbalance, reporters have long favored news sources with higher levels of prestige and visibility (Gans, 1979).

To summarize the discussion thus far, research on journalistic role perceptions tends to oversimplify the way this concept is implemented. Most of this research draws from data covering a very broad spectrum of employment in journalism, so that the fit of the three-role typology in unclear for any specific context. This is an especially important point for the study of reporters at daily newspapers and they way that they conduct relationships with their news sources. Three hypotheses follow:

H_1: The range of role perceptions for daily newspaper reporters will be narrower than the range of role perceptions in the overall population of journalists.

H_2: The social context of daily newspaper reporters' work will play an important part in their overall role conceptions.

H_3: A reporter's social status in the newsroom and in the community will be linked to differences in role perceptions.

Method

Data collection for this study began by identifying concepts related to the five social forces under study: journalistic roles, peer expectations, organizational demands, community pressures, and the news sources themselves. A four-page questionnaire was designed in which respondents evaluated statements concerning their views on these social forces. Each statement was rated on an 11-point scale that ranged from "Disagree strongly" to "Agree strongly." The questionnaire contained 22 statements and 8 items about a respondent's reporting background. Only the 15 items most related to this study's concepts were used for the analysis.

The study was designed with cluster analysis in mind. The basic approach of cluster analysis is to look for patterns of response across a set of items. This technique often performs better at exploring issue orientations than traditional methods (such as crosstabulation or multiple regression), because it allows basic orientations to naturally emerge from the data rather than from the process of breaking respondents into groups according to demographic variables (cite my work roles article). Because cluster analysis is used to suggest a _typology_ of perceptions rather than describing _proportions_ of perceptions in a population, a large sample size was not necessary. Sampling began by identifying the state's daily newspapers (37 in all) and building a list of community populations and circulation sizes.

One paper's circulation was approximately 200,000, although the other papers ranged from about 70,000 to about 2,000. Communities ranged from about 180,000 people down to about 5,000. Overall, this information suggested three main groupings of newspapers: more than 40,000; 10,000 to 40,000; and less than 10,000 in daily circulation.

Four newspapers were chosen from each of the two larger newspaper size groups (from among 5 largest papers and from among 11 medium papers), while six were selected from among the 21 smallest papers. Names of reporters were then obtained from story by-lines and from phone calls to the newspapers. A total of 60 reporters were selected for the survey. Although this sampling scheme was not purely random in its selection of newspapers or reporters, there was no intentional slant to the selection process and the sample would likely be similar to other samples of the state's reporters. Further, the reporters sampled here are likely to represent typical working reporters rather than reporters working at national or regional newspapers.

The mail survey followed the recommendations of Dillman (1978) and Erdos (1983) and included personalized materials and follow-up mailings. Fifty one usable questionnaires were obtained, for a response rate of 85 percent.

Results and Discussion

Data analysis began by selecting survey questionnaire items that best represented the goals of this study. In all, 15 measures were chosen to be used in the cluster analysis (full item wording appears in the Appendix). Cluster analysis is a technique that can be used to compare people's responses over a set of items in order to detect overarching patterns of response among those respondents (see Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984 for more on this technique). It is much like using factor analysis to look for groups of cases rather than variables, except that cluster analysis creates groups by bringing cases together while factor analysis works to break a sample apart.

Through examination of the cluster dendrogram and joining distances, a three cluster solution was chosen. Item means were then calculated for each of the three clusters, along with the range of means across clusters for each item. The table is sorted according from largest to smallest differences in item means. The largest item means (at least an intensity of +/-2 on a 5-point scale) for each group are highlighted in bold type. This information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

Table 1 shows that the three clusters were most sharply defined by the contextual areas, rather than by journalistic role beliefs. Beliefs about journalistic roles were relatively similar across all three clusters, particularly concerning fairness and objectivity (item 19). None of the three clusters held particularly strong views about the adversarial role (items 11 and 16). In sum, with other social forces considered in the analysis, differences in journalistic role conception appeared relatively small across the three clusters.

These findings support hypotheses 1 and 2.

Table 1 also shows that the largest difference between clusters involved how power imbalances mediate the exchange between reporters and news sources (item 7). For this item, cluster 1 people acknowledged taking advantage of less powerful sources, while cluster 3 people felt just as strongly that they responded to news sources equally. Reporters' feelings for this item were reinforced by weaker but similar response patterns to items concerning sources' organizational prestige (item 20) and which party--journalists or news sources--tends to have the upper hand (item 20). In sum, cluster 1 reporters were more responsive to power differences between journalists and news sources, while cluster 3 reporters felt they dealt with news sources in an even-handed manner. Although cluster 2 reporters expressed neutral (or possibly mixed) views for item 7, they felt even more strongly than cluster three about the other two items in this dimension.

A productive analysis strategy at this point is to examine the dimensions of response patterns that distinguish the three opinion clusters. It is first important to note that although cluster 1 reporters' views were not particularly intense for most items, these people had positive means for all but one item. This suggests that cluster 1 reporters generally felt that their interaction with reporters was shaped by their social world. In other words, although cluster 1 reporters were concerned about fairness and objectivity, their responsiveness to social forces likely would mediate how they interacted with news sources. In particular, these reporters appear more concerned about the social forces that would impact their jobs most directly, including the views of their colleagues and the management of their organization.

Cluster 2 and cluster 3 reporters stand in clear contrast to those in cluster 1. Although not all views were particularly strong, cluster 2 reporters disagreed with 9 items and cluster 3 disagreed with 10. This suggests that these two clusters of reporters felt more independent of their social context. More specifically, besides their concerns about fairness and objectivity, the strongest item opinions for cluster 2 concerned lack of influence by their community (items 17, 20, and 14). Cluster 2 also held the strongest beliefs of the three clusters about their watchdog role. Combining these ideas suggests that cluster 2 reporters saw themselves as community guardians, although they are from adopting an adversarial relationship with their news sources.

Cluster 3 reporters stand out as the group with the strongest opinions. Besides general beliefs about fairness and objectivity, these reporters are the least likely to subscribe to an adversarial role. Further, a clear pattern emerges showing these reporters holding beliefs of independence from influence by their coworkers (items 15, 21, and 2). To a lesser extent, these reporters also hold beliefs about their independence from their organization and from news sources. Their views come closest to that of the neutral disseminator.

To summarize the findings so far:

- Common among all three clusters of reporters are concerns about objectivity and fairness. Beliefs in an adversarial or watchdog role do not provide clear distinctions between clusters.

- Cluster 1 reporters generally see their interaction with news sources as shaped by their social worlds.
- Cluster 2 reporters are particularly concerned about maintaining independence from community influences and also prescribe to the watchdog role to some extent.
- Cluster 3 people appear concerned about remaining neutral from social forces in their news source interactions. This is especially true for avoiding influence from their colleagues.

Table 2 about here

The next step in this analysis looks for connections between the three cluster orientations and their backgrounds, which helps address hypothesis 3. This information appears in Table 2. To facilitate detection of patterns in background characteristics, background information has been summarized into a single table. An initial examination of cluster means found little clear differences between clusters. To explore the possibility that differences in means were masked through skewed distributions of responses, Tukey stem-and-leaf diagrams were prepared for each of the interval level variables (experience, time with newspaper, age, years in the area, staff size). These diagrams can be interpreted much like a histogram. In each case, a skewed distribution was found, with most values centered toward the lower end. For example, there were very few journalists older than 40 years, yet four were at least 60 years old. These findings suggested that an examination of means across clusters could be somewhat misleading for these measures.

To facilitate a more meaningful analysis, medians were computed for each background variable. Reporters were then split into two groups according to the variable median, with median values assigned to a group after inspection of a variable's overall distribution. The news staff size variable was not split by the median value, however. Instead, a natural break occurred where a paper's news staff was either 8 or fewer, or more than 15. This break therefore was used, because it seemed more meaningful within the variable's context.

Two points from the previous discussion are important to restate for interpreting background information: first, cluster 1 reporters were most sensitive to their social worlds, and second, some degree of similarity appeared in the views of clusters 2 and 3. A clear relationship stands out that helps explain these differences in orientations toward the journalist-source relationship: cluster 1 reporters, those most concerned about their social environment, are the least experienced, youngest, have lived in their community the for the shortest time, and are most likely to be working in a small community. In other words, those reporters likely to have the least prestige and power are the ones whose journalistic role perceptions are most sharply mediated by their social environment.

Cluster 2 reporters, those closest to a community watchdog role, tended to be more experienced, have spent more time with their newspaper, are older, and work at a larger newspaper. These reporters are also less likely to be working in a small community.

Cluster 3 reporters, those most concerned about remaining uninfluenced by their social environment--and coworkers in particular--had background profiles between clusters 1 and 3, but not greatly different from cluster 2 reporters.

Thus, the third hypothesis, that a reporter's social status in the newsroom and in the community will be linked to differences in role perceptions, was also supported.

Conclusions

This study explored the premise that journalistic role beliefs go beyond views about "journalistic mission" to encompass other elements of a reporter's social environment. It also argued that the research on journalistic role perceptions based on broad-ranging samples of journalists does not provide a close match for the way that role perceptions toward news sources develop for daily newspaper reporters. Through the literature of newswork, the data from this study considered influences from coworkers, the news organization, the community, and news source relationships. Data analysis found that basic journalistic beliefs were indeed mediated by these other social forces. All three hypotheses were supported.

Two key points stood out most clearly. A first point is that differences in journalistic role perceptions were relatively small, with no strong adversarial role present. This lack of a real adversarial role is likely the result of social pressures from the local community and the news organization. Most reporters at daily newspapers have regular contact with their news sources, both on and off the job. Further, their news organizations make clear the links between organizational survival and maintaining amiable relationships with those people vested in the community power structure. This situation is much different from that of reporters working at national or regional media in major cities.

A second key point concerns differences between reporters of different ages/experience levels/community sizes. Here, younger, less experienced reporters working in smaller communities tended to be the least bound by core journalistic beliefs and were also most concerned about their social environment. These reporters also had less social status, both in their newsroom and in their relationships with news sources. In contrast, older, more experienced journalists tended to feel less constrained by social forces, and are more likely to fulfill their journalistic roles, which tended toward the disseminator.

Future studies need to examine how these role beliefs correspond to journalists' actual behaviors with news sources. That kind of research is better done through field observation and interviews with reporters. Further exploration of role perceptions in specific media should be undertaken, as well as exploring the correspondence between the role perceptions of reporters and editors in similar media organization contexts. Finally, larger scale data gathering can build on the findings here to provide more generalizable descriptive results.

In sum, the findings of this study urge a broader conception of journalistic role perceptions, one that goes beyond professional ideals and also incorporates social realities.

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APPENDIX:

FULL SURVEY ITEM WORDINGS BY STUDY CONCEPT
(Survey item number included for reference purposes)

Journalistic Role

11. When dealing with news sources, my role as a "watchdog" often guides my actions.

16. My concerns about future interviews with a news source tend to reduce my tendency to act as a source's adversary.

19. My role as a journalist demands that I treat news sources objectively and fairly in all situations.

Coworkers

2. During my encounters with news sources, I often think about what reporters I work with would do.

15. What other reporters at my paper think about a particular news source is an important consideration in how I deal with that person.

21. My interaction with news sources is frequently shaped by what I think other people in my profession would do.

Organization

3. My interactions with news sources are frequently shaped by what I think my newspaper expects of me.

22. I tend to be mroe responsive to the concerns of my organization than to the concerns of my news sources.

Community

6. My understanding of the nature of my community often influences dealings with news sources.

14. I tend to be more flexible with news sources who are influential in the community.

17. My newspaper's interests in the community often shape how I interact with news sources.

Sources

7. If a source doesn't have much clout, I tend to feel more in charge during interviews with that person.

9. I usually keep the expectations of a news source in mind when reporting on a story.

18. In general, news sources have the upper hand over journalists.

20. The prestige of a news source's organization is an important consideration in how I will interact with that news source.

TABLE 1

Journalist Clusters By Range Across Each Item (Strongest Cluster Means In **Bold**).

Item	C1 (n=15)	C2 (n=21)	C3 (n=15)	Range
7. Feel more in charge if source doesn't have clout.	**2.13**	0.52	-1.93	4.06
15. Other reporters' view of source shapes dealings.	-0.53	-1.38	**-4.47**	3.94
17. Newspaper's community interests shape interaction with sources.	1.20	**-2.67**	1.07	3.87
21. Interaction shaped by what others in profession would do.	1.07	-1.14	**-2.80**	3.87
2. Encounters with sources shaped by what other reporters would do.	0.13	-1.05	**-3.60**	3.73
22. More responsive to concerns of organization than of sources.	**2.00**	1.00	-1.73	3.73
20. Prestige of source's organization shapes interaction.	1.40	**-2.05**	-1.27	3.45
18. Sources have the upper hand over journalists.	1.40	-1.67	-1.20	3.07
14. More flexible with sources influential in the community.	0.53	**-2.00**	**-2.40**	2.93
9. Keep source's expectations in mind when reporting.	1.87	-0.95	-0.33	2.82
3. Interactions with sources shaped by newspaper's expectations.	1.53	-0.10	-1.13	2.66
16. Concerns about future interviews reduce acting as adversary.	1.53	0.05	0.20	1.48
11. Watchdog role often guides actions.	1.53	1.86	0.40	1.46
6. Understanding of community often influences dealings with sources.	**2.60**	1.38	**2.40**	1.22
19. Role as a journalist demands fairness and objectivity.	**3.53**	**4.43**	**3.53**	0.90

Note: Values represent cluster item means, where -5=disagree strongly, +5=agree strongly, and 0=neutral. Range represents the difference between the highest and lowest cluster means for each item.

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Table 2

Background Information for the Three Clusters

Characteristic	Cluster 1 (n=15)	Cluster 2 (n=21)	Cluster 3 (n=15)
Years as a journalist (median=6)			
0-6 years (n=28)	78.6%	42.9%	53.3%
7 or more years (n=22)	21.4	57.1	46.7
Years with newspaper (median=3)			
0-3 years (n=22)	50.0%	38.1%	46.7%
4 or more years (n=28)	50.0	61.9	53.3
Age (median=30)			
29 years or younger (n=24)	73.3%	28.6%	46.7%
30 years or older (n=27)	26.7	71.4	53.3
Years lived in area (median=8)			
0-7 years (n=25)	73.3%	42.9%	33.3%
8 or more years (n=26)	26.7	57.1	66.7
News staff size			
7 or fewer (n=35)	73.3%	61.9%	73.3%
15 or more (n=16)	26.7	38.1	26.7
Have a journalism degree			
percent "yes"	66.7%	71.4%	60.0%
Community population			
50,000 or more (n=20)	33.3%	42.9%	40.0%
25,000 to 30,000 (n=14)	13.3	42.9	20.0
5,000 t0 12,000 (n=17)	53.3	14.3	40.0

COHEN V. COWLES MEDIA:

HAS THE COURT DECISION AFFECTED JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES?

March 1995

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A paper submitted to the Newspaper Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication for presentation at its 1995 annual convention.

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COHEN V. COWLES MEDIA:
HAS THE COURT DECISION AFFECTED JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES?

Journalists have come to rely on the U.S. Supreme Court for the protection of their rights to gather and distribute news. Cases such as New York Times v. Sullivan (1964), which made it harder for public officials to win libel cases, and Richmond Newspapers v. Virginia (1980), which established a right of access to courtrooms, have expanded the rights of journalists under the First Amendment. Other U.S. Supreme Court decisions, such as Cohen v. Cowles Media (1991), have limited constitutional protections for journalists. In Cohen, the court held that the First Amendment did not exempt newspapers from their obligations to keep promises -- specifically, promises of confidentiality to news sources. While court decisions, both for and against the media, influence the legal environment in which journalists operate, little research has examined how specific court decisions affect the day-to-day work of newspaper reporters and editors.

The Cohen case, in particular, raises questions about its impact on news professionals because the U.S. Supreme Court had not previously ruled on journalists' obligations to keep promises of confidentiality. After the Cohen ruling, numerous articles in trade publications, law journals, and academic journals criticized the decision for its intrusion into an area usually controlled more by ethical than legal considerations (Mauro, 1991; Denniston, 1992; Splichal & Bunker, 1994; Parrell, 1993; Alexander, 1993; Bunker & Splichal, 1993; Brueggeman, 1992; Weifert, 1991-92). Professors Sigman L. Splichal and Matthew D. Bunker use Cohen as an example of the court's expansion of the general law doctrine -- the idea that certain laws apply equally to everyone -- in media-related cases (1994, pp. 140-141). The court has long held that the media are not exempt from general laws applicable to all citizens and business entities, such as antitrust and tax laws. Typically, however, the court has rejected the application of general laws to the media if they threaten First Amendment rights of providing information (1994, pp. 137-138). Splichal and Bunker see Cohen as expanding the general law obligation of keeping promises, to promises of confidentiality between reporters and sources, an area "usually governed by journalistic ethics and the fundamental need of news organizations to maintain public credibility" (1994, p. 140).

What impact does a decision such as Cohen have on journalists? On a broad scale, the decision could be expected to affect American media since Cohen may become a precedent in other cases seeking damages from the media for breaking promises. But the case may not have an impact on the newsgathering practices and publication decisions made by journalists in their daily work, particularly if journalists view the situation in the Cohen case more from an ethical than from a legal perspective. Numerous articles in journalistic trade publications predicted Cohen would force journalists to revise their practices in making promises of confidentiality to sources (Sommers, 1991b; Stein, 1991; Lystad, 1992). Other research, however, has shown limited impact from specific court cases on journalists' day-to-day work decisions (Anderson & Murdock, 1981; Levin & Rubert, 1994; Werner, 1994). Studies on journalistic decision-making generally have shown that professional expectations, the work setting, and journalists' own moral standards govern journalists' ethical decisions more than legal considerations (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991; Singletary, Caudill, Caudill, & White, 1990; White & Pearce, 1991; White & Singletary, 1993).

Accordingly, this study examines the impact of Cohen on newspaper journalists in an attempt to ascertain whether the reporter-source confidentiality issue in the case is seen by them as more of an ethical or legal consideration.

Background of Cohen

Near the end of the 1982 gubernatorial campaign in Minnesota, Dan Cohen, a public relations consultant to Independent-Republican candidate Wheelock Whitney, separately approached four Twin Cities' reporters and gave them information he thought would be damaging to Democratic-Farmer-Labor candidate Rudy Perpich. The information revealed that DFL

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lieutenant governor candidate Marlene Johnson had been convicted of petty theft in 1970. The disclosure of the information to the reporters was made on the condition that Cohen's name not be used in the news stories (Salisbury, 1991, 19-20).

Even though the reporters had promised Cohen confidentiality in exchange for the information, editors at the Minneapolis Star Tribune and the St. Paul Pioneer Press independently decided not only to publish the information but also to disclose the identity of their confidential source. The Associated Press also ran the story, but did not disclose Cohen's name. A WCCO-TV reporter opted not to use the story. As a result of his identification in the two newspapers, Cohen lost his job and later sued the newspapers for breach of contract and fraudulent misrepresentation (Salisbury, 1991, 20-21).

In 1988, a six-member jury ruled in Cohen's favor, awarding him $200,000 in compensatory damages and $500,000 in punitive damages (Salisbury, 1991, 19). The Minnesota Court of Appeals upheld the $200,000, ruling that the newspapers had committed breach of contract, but overruled the punitive damages (Cohen v. Cowles Media, 1989). The Minnesota Supreme Court overturned the decision, ruling that enforcing a reporter's promise of confidentiality would violate the newspapers' First Amendment rights (Cohen v. Cowles Media, 1990). On June 24, 1991, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the Minnesota Supreme Court, ruling that a promise is a promise regardless of the First Amendment (Cohen v. Cowles Media, 1991). Writing for the court, Justice Byron White said that "the First Amendment does not confer on the press a constitutional right to disregard promises that would otherwise be enforced under state law" (Cohen v. Cowles Media, 1991, p. 2519).

In 1992, on remand from the U.S. Supreme Court, the Minnesota Supreme Court reversed its earlier position and affirmed the jury's award of $200,000 in compensatory damages to Cohen (Cohen v. Cowles Media, 1992). The court ruled for Cohen on the basis of promissory estoppel, a doctrine holding that some promises are legally enforceable if a person (in this case, Cohen) acted on the presumption that the promise would be honored and suffered injury because it was not.

Response to Cohen in trade press

Cohen v. Cowles Media drew extensive attention in the journalistic trade press both before and after the U.S. Supreme Court's 1991 decision in the case. Most of the articles in the trade press characterized the keeping of promises of confidentiality to news sources as an ethical issue and criticized attempts to turn such promises into legal obligations. Many of the articles also expressed concern that Cohen would lead to more lawsuits alleging violations of promises of confidentiality and that journalists would have to tighten procedures for making such promises.

Even before the initial jury verdict against the newspapers in July 1988, articles in trade publications discussed the growing practice of reporters revealing the names of confidential sources to editors and the legal implications of publishing the names of those sources. Tony Mauro, a USA Today reporter who covers the U.S. Supreme Court, traced the demand by editors to know the names of confidential sources to the 1981 Janet Cooke case in which the Washington Post gave back its Pulitzer Prize after learning that Cooke, a reporter, had made up her story about an 8-year-old heroin addict (1987, p. 38). He noted, however, that not all reporters agree that they should share the names of their sources with editors, particularly if they fear their superiors may overrule their promises as the Minneapolis and St. Paul editors did in Cohen (1987, p. 37).

Monica Langley, a Wall Street Journal reporter, and Lee Levine, an attorney who practices media law, see the involvement of courts in disputes over promises of confidentiality as a threat to the First Amendment rights of journalists: "[T]here is a significant price to be paid when the government, even in the form of courts, is called upon to resolve disputes concerning the publication of news" (1988, p. 24). Determining whether to uphold promises of confidentiality should be an ethical decision, and turning it into a legal obligation, as in Cohen, may make reporters hesitant about receiving information from confidential sources, they argued

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(1988, p. 24).

After the initial jury verdict, trade publication articles frequently warned about its negative implications for journalists. An article in Editor & Publisher reported that many journalists viewed the decision "as a major setback for press freedom" (Fitzgerald, 1988, p. 11). First Amendment attorney Floyd Abrams told the Associated Press that Cohen "opens the door for an enormous range of real or imagined sources to claim that, in one way or another, they've been victimized by the press" (Fitzgerald, 1988, p. 11). Another article reported that the case had "given the heebie-jeebies to a lot of news people" ("Wimping out on Promises," 1988, p. 15). John Finnegan, then executive editor of the St. Paul Pioneer Press, predicted the verdict would force newspapers around the country to review how they handle promises of confidentiality ("Confidential Source Wins Case," 1988, p. 42).

Joel Kramer, then executive editor of the Minneapolis Star Tribune, decided after the jury verdict that the newspaper needed specific guidelines for anonymous sources, and those were published on the front page of the newspaper in August 1988. Kramer wrote in the American Society of Newspaper Editors Bulletin that the Star Tribune was scrutinizing anonymous information more carefully, which he thought would lead to more accurate and reliable news stories (1988, p. 6). Richard P. Cunningham, former ombudsmen for the Minneapolis newspaper, criticized the Star Tribune's new policy, however, for giving management the "responsibility for making and breaking promises of anonymity." He thought this detracted from reporters' ability to be independent moral agents (1988, p. 8).

Articles about Cohen continued to appear in the trade press as the case moved through Minnesota's courts, presumably because of the impact it could have on journalists nationwide if contract law was found to apply to promises of confidentiality. In September 1989, the Minnesota Court of Appeals upheld the verdict against the newspapers. An editorial in Editor & Publisher said the ruling could create a new area of litigation that would be a "boon to litigants and their lawyers. Editors and reporters in their contacts with news sources will have to mean what they say and do what they say they will do. ... Editors will be constrained in their ability to alter texts or even make a decision to publish or not to publish" ("Confidentiality Ruling," 1989, p. 4). Lyle Denniston, who covers the U.S. Supreme Court for the Baltimore Sun, wrote that decisions on how to treat the identity of sources should be a matter of editorial discretion, not an issue decided by the courts (1989, p. 50).

The biggest barrage of articles about Cohen in the trade press occurred in the months just prior to and after the U.S. Supreme Court's June 1991 decision. Most of the coverage struck recurring themes about the potential damage of the case to press freedom and the constraints it would place on

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reporters' relationships with news sources. Some writers also called on the media to establish better procedures for handling promises of confidentiality.

Louise Sommers, an attorney and communication law professor, called Cohen a hard case for the U.S. Supreme Court because the media seem to want constitutional protection in all instances involving source confidentiality. They don't want courts to force them to reveal the names of confidential sources, yet they also don't want to be held legally responsible for identifying sources who have been granted confidentiality (1991a, p. 32).

F. Dennis Hale of Bowling Green State University in Ohio called the Supreme Court's decision a "loss for political speech" since the newspapers were punished for printing truthful information about a political campaign (1991, 60). William and Mary Professor Rodney A. Smolla said the greatest significance of Cohen was "its reinforcement of a trend over the last several court terms, in which the court invokes the phrase 'laws of general applicability' to deny constitutional claims that implicate core Bill of Rights values" (1991, p. 28).

Tony Mauro summed up the reaction of many in the media to the Cohen decision: "While not condoning the newspapers' actions [violating promises of confidentiality], many in the media felt it was not the court's business to enforce proper journalistic conduct" (1991, p. 6). The most in-depth account of the events leading to the Supreme Court's decision was written by Bill Salisbury, the St. Paul reporter who had promised confidentiality to Cohen. He wrote that the case had not had "a dramatic impact on the way journalism is practiced in the Twin Cities," but said reporters and editors were more cautious about granting confidentiality and about specifying the terms of agreements with sources (1991, p. 22).

Louise Sommers said *Cohen* underscored the need for journalists to establish clear guidelines on the use of confidential sources (1991b, p. 29). Mitchell Zuckoff, a staff writer for the *Boston Globe*, stressed the ethical lessons of the case. While he acknowledged *Cohen* might spawn more lawsuits, he wrote that its primary message should be for journalists to keep their promises: "Reporters must take meticulous care every time they make promises to sources. And they must be ready to keep those promises in all but the most compelling circumstances," (1991, p. 4).

Coverage of the impact of *Cohen* continued in the trade press in early 1992, particularly after the Minnesota Supreme Court rendered its second opinion in the case -- on remand from the U.S. Supreme Court -- in January of that year. Lyle Denniston found the Minnesota Supreme Court's final decision, which went against the newspapers, discouraging because it left the media without protection under either the First Amendment or a state's constitution. The courts had taken on the role of second-guessing the decisions of editors, he wrote

(1992, p. 51).

Overall, the journalistic trade press tended to view Cohen as an invasion of the court into the rights of journalists to make editorial decisions. Many writers said decisions about promises of confidentiality should be based on ethical considerations, and speculated that the court's intrusion into this area would force reporters to alter their relationships with news sources.

Impact of legal cases on journalists

While many of the trade press articles predicted Cohen would change reporter-source confidentiality agreements, research on the impact of specific court cases on journalists' day-to-day work decisions, and on journalistic ethical decision-making, indicates legal decisions may have limited impact. This would be particularly true if journalists viewed the situation in Cohen as an ethical dilemma rather than a legal one. The trade press coverage of the case indicated that many journalists disapproved of the newspapers' decision to violate promises of confidentiality, but they did not support the court's intrusion into the area of reporter-source relationships.

Little academic research has looked at how specific legal cases have affected journalists' work habits. Professors Douglas A. Anderson and Marianne Murdock (1981) surveyed 103 newspaper journalists about the impact of decisions by the

Burger court. Some of the court's decisions were seen as eroding First Amendment protections (1981, pp. 525-526). Anderson and Murdock asked specifically about the impact of the Herbert v. Lando decision (1979), which allowed libel plaintiffs to inquire into the state of mind of defendants (usually reporters) and to question them about prepublication decision-making. While 82.5% of the editors disagreed or strongly disagreed that Lando made their newspapers "less aggressive" when deciding whether to print potentially libelous material, 74% agreed that they are "increasingly careful" when editing stories (1981, p. 527). Editors of larger-circulation newspapers were more likely to check "potentially libelous passages" with their publishers than were editors of smaller-circulation newspapers (1981, p. 527). Both this study and another by Douglas A. Anderson, Joe W. Milner, and Mary-Lou Galician (1988) indicate that editors frequently discuss legal issues with attorneys and perceive a need for information on media law cases. For example, nearly 87% of the 97 editors responding to the second study said their newspapers retained an attorney who was available for consultation when stories that could create legal problems were processed. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents agreed that it was increasingly important for journalists to have an understanding of communication law (1988, p. 296).

Professors Daniel A. Levin and Ellen Blumberg Rubert (1994) surveyed newspaper editors on the specific impact of

Cohen. The researchers conducted telephone interviews with 51 randomly selected editors at 17 dailies, 31 weeklies, and 3 other newspapers (1994, pp. 441, 462). Levin and Rubert found that only 17 of the editors knew about the Cohen case (1994. pp. 442. 467). Of those 17, 3 said they learned about Cohen through professional journals, 4 said they learned about Cohen through professional journals and contacts with attorneys. and 10 did not respond to this question (1994. pp. 442. 467). Six respondents said they had reviewed their publications policies for editors on overriding promises of confidentiality within the past five years because of the Cohen decision (1994. pp. 442. 467), but only 1 respondent had changed a policy for reporters or editors because of Cohen (1994. p. 434).

Levin and Rubert also asked respondents about the likely effect of the case on the newspaper industry. Eleven respondents said the case would lead newspapers to change their policies on confidentiality to require editor approval of such agreements: 4 said it would lead to increased supervision of reporters; 9 said it would have a chilling effect on newspapers and lead to fewer stories using confidential sources: 2 said it would have a negative effect on reporter morale: 10 said it would have minimal effect: and 8 mentioned other effects such as higher attorney bills and loss of basic free speech rights (1994, p. 468).

Legal commentator Carl Werner (1994) also has written an

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article about the aftermath of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Cohen* ruling, but his analysis deals largely with the legal impact of the case. While many legal and professional commentators had predicted the case would lead to frivolous litigation from disgruntled news sources. Werner wrote that "three years after the decision was announced, the [predicted] flood [of litigation] looks more like a trickle" (1994, p. 2101). He concluded that the few post-*Cohen* cases that have been decided "tentatively indicate that courts will apply *Cohen* narrowly (1994, p. 2106). Competition in the new industry will ensure that journalists continue taking risks, such as making promises of confidentiality, in investigative stories. Werner concluded (1994, p. 2107).

Journalists' ethical decision-making

Three recent articles have reported on empirical studies examining journalists' motives for ethical decision-making. Professors Michael W. Singletary, Susan Caudill, Edward Caudill, and Allen White (1990) conducted two separate studies of 17 professional journalists and 49 mass communication students. The researchers said most participants in the studies had a "mainstream ethical orientation," which included "concern for credibility with the audience, the public's need to know, and standards of colleagues and employer, and of their field" (1990, 972). Legal considerations did not seem to play a large role in motives for ethical decision-making, even

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though it was one of the areas included in the studies (1990, 967).

The second study by Professors H. Allen White and R. Charles Pearce (1991) used 114 college students to explore journalists' motives for decision-making using an approach similar to that of Singletary et al. (1990). Some participants in this study did use law as a basis for ethical decisions, but peers, employers, standards of the field, and concern about audience credibility also seemed to play a role (1991, p. 463). Participants using intrinsic motivations for ethical behavior had more predictable attitudes toward ethical dilemmas that participants using extrinsic guides (1991, p. 455).

The third study by Professors H. Allen White and Michael W. Singletary (1993) found that journalists motivated by extrinsic guides such as peers, employers, or the law in ethical decision-making were motivated to perform well on the job. Journalists concerned with personal advancement as an ethical motivation were less motivated to perform well on the job. For journalists using religious/moral beliefs as an ethical motivation, the results varied depending on the ethical decision (1993, p. 330).

In their book on American journalists, David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit (1991) include a section on sources of influence for journalistic ethics. Day-to-day newsroom learning was cited the most often as an influence on journalism ethics, with 80% of respondents listing this as an influence. Seventy-two percent cited the influence of family upbringing, 61% cited senior editors, 57% coworkers, 53% journalism school teachers, 52% senior reporters, 50% college/university teachers, 35% religious upbringing, 25% publishers, and 24% high school teachers (1991, p. 135). While respondents were not asked about the influence of legal cases or the law on journalism ethics, Weaver and Wilhoit's study does point out the substantial influence of the work environment, supervisors, and coworkers in shaping journalists' ideas about ethics.

Weaver and Wilhoit's study also asked journalists about their behavior in specific situations involving ethical decisions. Respondents overwhelmingly disapproved of promising confidentiality to a source and then not honoring the promise. Ninety-five percent disapproved of this action (1991, p. 127). This finding has significance in trying to understand the impact of the Cohen case since it indicates how strongly journalists condemn the breaking of promises of confidentiality. This may suggest that journalists would have difficulty conceiving of the situation in Cohen as a legal issue since it has such strong ethical overtones.

In summary, the three empirical articles cited suggest that legal considerations may play a part in ethical decision-making by journalists, but that numerous other influences, including professional expectations, also have significant im-

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pact. Weaver and Wilhoit's work did not specifically examine the influence of legal considerations, but it suggests that the work setting plays the largest role in governing journalists' ethical decisions.

Method

In-depth. on-site, taped interviews were conducted in the summer of 1993 with 21 reporters and editors at 10 daily newspapers in the United States. The interviews each lasted between one and two hours. and were part of a larger study on newspapers' use of anonymous sources and ethical policies related to anonymous sources. The newspapers selected for the study were in the Midwest. Northeast. and Atlantic States. Circulations for the daily newspapers. situated in everything from small cities to major metropolitan areas, ranged from about 40.000 to 800.000. All 10 papers had ombudsmen or reader representatives. staff members specifically assigned to handle readers' complaints about news content. At some newspapers. ombudsmen also play a role in assessing ethical decisions made by journalists and the newspaper content resulting from those decisions.

Newspapers concerned enough about ethics and credibility to appoint ombudsmen could be expected to have a higher level of ethical awareness and concern among staff members. For that reason. journalists at these papers were regarded as good sources of information about the impact of Cohen and the ethical and legal implications of the case. The results are not intended to be generalizable to all U.S. newspapers, but they do present a detailed picture of 10 papers and thus may serve as a valuable springboard for broader, more empirically based research.

This study sought to examine two research questions:

(1) What impact did Cohen v. Cowles Media have on the day-to-day decisions and practices of newspaper reporters and editors?

(2) Do newspaper journalists view the violation of a promise of confidentiality in Cohen as primarily an ethical or legal issue, and why?

Findings

Working journalists' knowledge of Cohen varied widely. While one reporter said she had no knowledge of the case, a few editors were able to discuss the case and its implications in considerable detail. Most journalists said they knew of the case and were able to discuss it in general terms. Reporters tended to have less knowledge of the case than did editors. The circulation and geographical location of a newspaper appeared to have no bearing on what a journalist knew -- or didn't know -- about the Cohen case.

Most journalists first heard about Cohen from newspapers, trade publications, and/or Associated Press articles. The publications mentioned most frequently were Editor & Publisher, Columbia Journalism Review, American Journalism Review, Washington Post, and New York Times. Only one reporter said she first heard of the case by word-of-mouth -- from her newspaper's ombudsman.

All journalists interviewed said with little hesitation that Cohen had had no impact on the way they operated as reporters or editors. The case, in fact, seemed to be viewed more as a "legal curiosity," as one reporter put it. It seemed implausible that a Cohen-type episode could occur at any of the 10 newspapers, according to those interviewed. Instead, editors agreed that their papers either would have had Dan Cohen agree to "go on the record," or they would not have published the story.

With more questioning, however, journalists (generally reporters) usually conceded that the case had had a subtle influence on them as they went about their daily professional duties. While on the one hand admitting the case had had no impact, some journalists said it had raised an "awareness" and a "concern" that if it happened in Minnesota, "it could happen to me" and that if a reporter's decision were overruled his "paper could really get in trouble." But while admitting that Cohen "serves as a caution" to newspapers, journalists nevertheless did not seem cautious themselves: somewhat concerned, but not cautious.

While some reporters and editors said that Cohen had had no effect on anyone in their organization, other journalists

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were somewhat more likely to detect an impact from the *Cohen* case on fellow journalists at their newspaper. Some editors said the case "helped raise the discussion" and that it "clarified" when reporters should and shouldn't enter into such agreements. Editors seemed to agree that the case had sparked "conversation," that it had made journalists "more alert." One journalist gave the following example: "Someone starts talking to you and they say, 'I don't want my name used with this,' and they start telling you something that potentially could get your paper in trouble. And you say, 'Wait a minute. I may have to tell an editor who you are. Do you want me to do that?' So it has had an impact."

Journalists interviewed saw the *Cohen* case exclusively from an ethical -- not legal -- perspective. "Truth Telling" and "keeping a promise" were the two concerns cited (often repeatedly) by nearly everyone interviewed. Editors in particular said they were concerned to protect their credibility, the credibility of their newspaper, and the credibility of their profession. One journalist said, "The only thing I have is my word, and if I violate that word, I won't be able to practice what I do." No one invoked the First Amendment, instead focusing on the need to keep promises. The reasoning, one editor said, was simple "because the truth is the truth is the truth." Journalists saw reporters as natural extensions of newspapers that collectively have ethics.

No one spoke in terms of a legal "contract," but rather from the ethics standpoint of keeping a "promise," of not violating "their word." Expressions such as "fair play" and "honor" cropped up frequently in the interviews. One editor mentioned the need to trust his own staff. and said a Cohen case could "tear a newsroom apart. You do that. and I don't think that newsroom will ever be the same again." Another editor said: "As a company and as a newsroom. if you decide each day what to put in and what not. we're bringing into play a set of our own judgments about what's right and what's wrong, and not what's lawful and not lawful."

Discussion

Judging from the results of this study. Cohen has had little discernible impact in newspaper newsrooms -- even in news organizations with ethics track records as evidenced by the presence of ombudsmen. One editor referred to the case as "a topic of conversation. but not an earthquake." This case. which has at its core the intersection of the First Amendment and media ethics. has been viewed by reporters and editors from solely an ethical (as opposed to legal) perspective. While even a study such as this. based on lengthy. in-depth interviews is unable to completely explain Cohen's lack of impact and journalists' concern only with the ethical components of the case. it nevertheless does suggest partial explanations.

Journalists interviewed considered the "burning" of Dan

Cohen by the Twin Cities newspapers as an unethical aberration that would be inconceivable in their own newsrooms. Because of this, one suspects that the chilling consequences of the Supreme Court's decision was somewhat easily dismissed in the minds of most journalists, who simply considered the case as some sort of fluke. And they tended to dismiss, and thus disregard any impact this case might have in their newsrooms with a "it couldn't happen here because we don't behave that way" reasoning. _New York Times_ columnist Anthony Lewis said the _Cohen_ case was "simply out of the park for bad journalism. It is clear that promise should never have been made under these circumstances." (Youm & Stonecipher, 1992, p. 85, quoting Anthony Lewis)

Despite the reasoning, though, there appeared to be a basic lack of awareness on the part of some -- mostly new reporters -- of either the _Cohen_ case or the basic issues the case has stirred up in the past few years. According to one senior editor: "We're a newspaper where we have a lot of entry-level kinds of people. I suspect there are some young people who have never heard of the _Cohen_ decision, as recent as it might be." Or, to quote an editor at a large metropolitan daily, "I'm surprised sometimes because many of the reporters would not know about [the _Cohen_ case], or know about it only vaguely."

Such a lack of awareness is unsettling, especially as it occurs at the very newspapers with the greatest public commit-

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ment to ethics as evidenced by the presence of ombudsmen, frequent media-ethics columns, and established ethics policies. One can only imagine what the situation may be like at publications with less of a commitment to ethics.

The Cohen case, in the minds of most of the journalists interviewed, may have had little impact largely because it was considered more an "ethical" than a "legal" issue -- more subjective than objective in nature. Inherently these editors and reporters indicated that it is easier to interpret and react to legal "musts" than to ethical "shoulds."

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The Relationship of Copy Desk Leader Behaviors to Job Stress, Hardiness and Health Factors in Copy Editors

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> My biggest frustration is repeatedly asking (copy editors) to do more and more work while our newsroom restructures itself. As our responsibility grows, our size does not. That is both unfair and perilous. (It would make my job easier if) senior editors recognized what we do. Night after night we catch and fix far more mistakes than we make. Also, less frenetic days would be helpful. As it stands, we work nonstop from the time we get here until the time we get home.
>
> Copy Desk Supervisor, Male, 33

> I feel unappreciated and taken for granted by an ungrateful city desk and arrogant reporters. There are a few genuinely appreciative people but they are the exception.
>
> Copy Editor, Female, 23

What are the causes of such obvious frustration among copy editors and their supervisors? Do the behaviors of copy desk supervisors affect job attitudes among copy editors? And can newspaper editors and other managers work to alleviate job stress and burnout among copy editors to lessen the effects of stress?

This is the fourth in a series of studies that look at job burnout, job attitudes and health in newspaper reporters and copy editors. The study found significant relationships among leadership style of the supervisor, job stress, personality hardiness, and health problems in copy editors at 15 daily newspapers. In addition, the study found that almost 40 percent of those surveyed plan to leave journalism within the next five years, and approximately 30 percent said they were either very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with their choice of a career.

Literature Review

In recent years the effect of job stress on personal health and job attitudes has been a frequent topic of research in many professions.[1] Investigators have shown that the recent life histories of hospitalized patients contain significantly more frequent and serious stressful events than do histories of matched controls from the general population.[2] Stress can be caused by any number of sources. This study looked at occupational stress and health in copy editors and the relationship that certain components of the leadership behavior of the desk supervisor may have on that stress and other attitudes about the job. The study goes a step further by considering the intervening variable of personality hardiness that may affect the relationship between job stress and health.

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[1] Suzanne C. Kobasa, "Stressful Life Events, Personality and Health: An Inquiry Into Hardiness," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37:1-11 (January 1979).

Excessive occupational stress can manifest itself in job burnout.[3] High burnout levels have been associated with job turnover, increased health risks, and high work pressure. Freudenberger[4] indicated that job burnout is a syndrome of physical and emotional exhaustion produced by excessive demands on the energy, strength, and resources of the individual. A relationship among job satisfaction, job burnout, and job attrition previously has been noted.[5] It would appear that job satisfaction, job stress, job burnout, and job attrition form a behavioral continuum. Symptoms include emotional exhaustion, psychosomatic complaints, treatment of co-workers as objects, and low levels of job satisfaction and personal accomplishment. When these responses persist over time, they can develop into a syndrome labeled "job burnout."[6] Job burnout can be characterized as a type of withdrawal syndrome from work.

With increasing attention being paid to the debilitating effects of burnout, and with the growing consensus that stress is a contributing factor to burnout, researchers have begun to investigate variables that serve as resources that increase resistance or buffer stressful events. Personality hardiness is one such resource.[7] The hardy personality type has been looked at in hundreds of research studies featured in dozens of scholarly journals including those published by the American Psychological Association and others.

Many of these studies have focused on a personality structure (hardiness) that differentiates individuals who become sick under stress from those who do not. For example, a person in good health is generally better able to withstand or buffer the effects of job stress. On the other hand, a sustained high level of job stress may cause significant health problems. Personality hardiness seems to mediate both stress and health problems. Thus, the more hardy the personality, the better one is able to cope with both stress and health problems.

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[2] Suzanne Kobasa, p. 1.
[3] Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson, Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual, 2nd ed. (Palo Alto, Ca.: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1986), p. 1.
[4] Herbert J. Freudenberger, "The Staff Burnout Syndrome in Alternative Institutions," Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, 12:72-83 (Spring 1975).
[5] Michael R. Daley, "Burnout: Smouldering Problem in Protective Services," Social Work, 24:375-379 (September 1979).
[6] Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson, Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual, 2nd ed.(Palo Alto, Ca.,: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1986),p. 1.
[7] Suzanne Kobasa, p. 2.

Hardiness comprises three aspects of personality: (1) a sense of commitment to self and work; (2) perceptions of control over one's environment; and (3) the tendency to approach life changes with an attitude of challenge rather than threat. The theory of hardiness is existential in that it is based on the concept that if the world is able to produce stresses, it also is able to use them. Thus, coping is a method whereby the person *uses* each stress as an energy-giver rather than an energy-drainer. Researchers have looked extensively at individuals who experience high degrees of stress without falling ill compared to those persons who become sick.[8] These studies have found, for example, that personality hardiness moderates the effects of life stress in producing physical illness and depression in male executives.[9] Hardiness also has been shown to contribute to an individual's adapting to change, which helps reduce the risk of disease.[10] In addition, research has shown that hardiness can be a moderator in job burnout. Rich and Rich found that personality hardiness was an important stress-resistance resource in preventing or reducing burnout in female staff nurses.[11]

The hardy personality type formulated from these studies builds on the theories of existential psychologists including Kobasa and Maddi. Hardiness, they believe, can be learned through identification and construction of a logical and executable plan for self-improvement. Hardy people are considered to possess three general characteristics: (1) the belief they can control or influence the events of their lives, (2) an ability to feel deeply involved in or committed to the activities of their lives and (3) the anticipation of change as an exciting challenge to further development.

Stress and its physical and psychological effects on workers has been studied in many professions. A heavy workload and time pressure have been related to psychosomatic complaints, anxiety, depression and cardiovascular distress.[12, 13] Role ambiguity or lack of clarity about job roles and criteria of adequate performance of specific tasks has been associated with job dissatisfaction, anxiety, and employee turnover.[14]

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[8] Suzanne Kobasa, p. 2.

[9] R. J. Ganellan and P.H. Blaney, "Hardiness and Social Support as Moderators of the Efforts of Life Stress," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 47:155-163.

[10] Stephen Nagy and Charles L. Nix, "Relations Between Preventive Health Behavior and Hardiness," Psychological Reports, 65:339-345, (1989), p. 344.

[11] Victoria L. Rich and Alexander R. Rich, "Personality Hardiness and Burnout in Female Staff Nurses," IMAGE: Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 19: 63-66, (Summer 1987), p. 66.

[12] John R.P. French and Robert D. Caplan, "Organization Stress and Individual Strain," in The Failure of Success, Alfred J. Marrow, Ed. (New York: AMACOM, 1973).

[13] James J. House, Anthony J. McMichael, James A. Wells, Berton H. Kaplan and Lawrence R. Landerman, "Occupational Stress Among Factory Workers," Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 20:139-160, (1979).

Self-reported stress in journalists has been studied in survey research. A German study that surveyed 285 journalists, including 185 editors, found that only 19 percent felt they had sufficient time to complete their jobs. The study also found 50 percent reported they worked more than 60 hours per week. More than half of the subjects in this German study said they felt themselves at least occasionally under time pressure.[15]

Giles has studied the effects of stress on newspaper editors. He states psychological reactions to stress come from the unconscious and are the results of personality, attitudes and self-image. Editors in Giles' study were less likely to suffer from the psychological symptoms of stress if they had a sense of humor, felt competent and capable or if they believed they were responsible for their lives.[16]

A study of stress in newsrooms at Ohio dailies found that more than 90 percent of the respondents said they experienced job-related stress, with 23 percent reporting this stress hindered them in their job duties or made them feel bad. This study found the primary stressor to be personal desire for perfection (74 percent) followed by a supervisor's demands (68 percent).[17]

A related phenomenon to stress, job burnout, has been studied in detail in other professions. However, burnout as it affects journalists using psychological tests that measure the condition has just begun to be studied. Job burnout in reporters and copy editors has been studied by Cook and Banks. In their previous studies they looked at burnout as a dependent variable, with demographic factors and work environment serving as independent variables.[18, 19] In their 1991 study, Cook and Banks found job burnout levels highest in young, entry-level journalists working as copy editors at small dailies. The 1992 study replicated part of the 1991 study, but also found that various aspects of the work environment as measured by the Work Environment Scale correlated significantly with scores on the Maslach Burnout Inventory. In their 1993 study, Cook and Banks found a relationship among job burnout, personality hardiness, and health factors in reporters and copy editors.

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[14] Robert D. Caplan, Sidney Cobb, John R.P. French, R. Van Harrison and S.R. Pinneau, Job Demand and Workers' Health: Main Effects and Occupational Differences, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, (1980).

[15] Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, "State of Health and Stress Factors in Occupation: The Mass Media Profession," Social Science Medicine, 21:1367-1371 (1985).

[16] Robert H. Giles, Editors and Stress, New York: Associated Press Managing Editors Association, 1983, p. 10.

[17] Frederick F. Endres, "Stress in the Newsroom At Ohio Dailies," Newspaper Research Journal, 10:1, 1-14, (Fall 1988).

[18] Betsy B. Cook and Steven R. Banks, "Predictors of Job Burnout in Newspaper Reporters and Copy Editors," Journalism Quarterly, 70:1-10, (Spring 1993).

[19] Betsy B. Cook, Steven R. Banks, and Ralph J. Turner, "The Effects of Work Environment on Job Burnout in Newspaper Reporters and Copy Editors," Newspaper Research Journal, 14: 123-136, (Summer & Fall 1993).

Leadership behavior and its relationship to job attitudes has been studied in many professions, including journalism. Gaziano and Coulson looked at the type of newsroom management style (authoritarian or democratic) and journalists' attitudes toward their newspaper, supervisor and other variables at two newspapers.[21] They found that relationships among journalists (both editors and reporters) were more satisfactory at the newspaper with a seemingly authoritarian management style. However, Graziano and Coulson stress that journalists at each paper did not overwhelmingly favor the predominant management style at that paper.

Giles has looked at management style and its relationship to stress levels in employees.[22] In his book, "Newsroom Management: A Guide to Theory and Practice," Giles discusses practical management techniques for coping with organizational stress. Further, Giles states "the boss has power over how one feels." Findings in this area, Giles states, point to the approach the boss takes toward his or her subordinates.

In a case study of one southwestern newspaper, Jeffers and Lewis found that the 150 employees said their "boss or immediate supervisor strives to maintain warm and friendly relations" only somewhat (3 on a 1 to 5 scale).[23] Results were the same on the question of the extent to which the relationship between the supervisor and employee contributed to the employee's job satisfaction (3.5 on a 1 to 5 scale).

In other professions, the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire, Form 12, (LBDQ) has been used extensively to determine the relationship between the employee's job attitude and the supervisor's leadership style. [24] Studies using the LBDQ have found strong relationships between job satisfaction and the leader's behavior in professions such as school superintendents and principals, firefighters, mental health care workers, and manufacturing employees.[25] These studies seem to suggest a relationship between the satisfaction of the employee and the employee's reports of the leader's behavior as measured on the LBDQ.

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[21] Cecilie Gaziano and David C. Coulson, "Effect of Newsroom Management Styles on Journalists: A Case Study," Journalism Quarterly, 66: 869-880, Summer 1989.

[22] Robert H. Giles, Newsroom Management: A Guide to Theory and Practice. Detroit: Media Management Books, Inc, 1991.

[23] Dennis W. Jeffers and Nancy L. Lewis, "A Case Study of Newspaper Employee Perceptions of Communication Variables Related to Organizational Climate, Immediate Supervisor and Top Management." A paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Convention, August 1989. Eric Doc.: 310476.

[24] Ralph M. Stogdill, Manual for the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire - Form 12. Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, 1963.

The LBDQ has been used in a variety of occupations since its development in 1963 to obtain descriptions of a supervisor by the group members whom he supervises. It can be used to describe the behavior of the leader. The questionnaire is built on the empirical research indicating that a large number of hypothesized dimensions of leader behavior can be reduced to two strongly defined factors: consideration and initiation of structure. These factors were identified by Halpin and Winer and Fleishman. [26]

However, Stogdill took the theory a step further and looked a large body of research that supported the idea a number of variables operate in the differentiation of roles in social groups. These areas were added as dimensions or subscales on the LBDQ. The test looks at 12 areas of leader behavior based on the work of Halpin and Winer, Fleishman, and Stogdill. These areas are:

1. Representation - Speaks and acts as the representative of the group;
2. Demand Reconciliation - Reconciles conflicting demands; reduces disorder to the system;
3. Tolerance of Uncertainty - Is able to tolerate uncertainty and postponement without anxiety or upset;
4. Persuasiveness - Uses persuasion and argument effectively; exhibits strong convictions;
5. Initiation of Structure - Clearly defines own role and lets followers know what is expected;
6. Tolerance of Freedom - Allows followers scope for initiative, decision, and action;
7. Role Assumption - Actively exercises the leadership role rather than surrendering leadership to others;
8. Consideration - Regards the comfort, well being, status, and contributions of followers;
9. Production Emphasis - Applies pressure for productive output;

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[25] See, for example: S. Allen Wilcoxon, "Leadership Behavior and Therapist Burnout: A Study of Rural Agency Settings," Journal of Rural Community Psychology, 10: 3-14, (1989); Joseph J. Blase, Charles Dedrick and Marlene Strath, "Leadership Behavior of School Principals in Relation to Teacher Stress, Satisfaction, and Performance," Journal of Humanistic Education and Development, 24: 159-171 (June 1986); Ronald E. Riggi and Emmet J. Cole, "Agreement Between Subordinate and Superior Ratings of Supervisory Performance and Effects on Self and Subordinate Job Satisfaction," Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 65: 151-158, (June 1992).

[26] A.W. Halpin and B.J. Winer. A Factorial Study of the Leader Behavior Descriptions. In R.M. Stogdill and A.E. Coons, eds. Leader Behavior: Its Description and Measurement. Columbus: The Ohio State University. Monograph No. 88, 1957.

10. Predictive Accuracy - Exhibits foresight and ability to predict outcomes accurately;
11. Integration - Maintains a closely knit organization; resolves inter-member conflicts;
12. Superior Orientation - Maintains cordial relations with superiors; has influence over them; is striving for higher status.

Many times, the atmosphere of the working environment is highly reflective of the style and personality of the supervisor.[27] In this regard, the behavior of leaders in the work setting may contribute to the prevention or promotion of burnout symptoms by employees.[28] Leadership behaviors such as "willingness to develop structure in expectation and routine: and "consideration for employee morale" have been found in the professional literature as being critical in the support of employees working in high stress environments.[29]

It would seem that leadership behavior of supervisors could affect the burnout process in such a way as to enhance working conditions for those most likely to experience burnout symptoms. High burnout levels have already been established in the profession of copy editing.[30] Therefore, copy desk supervisors are in a position to alleviate or prevent burnout symptoms and related job stress problems in the copy editors who work for them.

The changing job duties of the copy editor and the effects those changes have had on the employees themselves have been studied by Russial.[31] In a content analysis of *Editor & Publisher* help-wanted advertisements, he found conflicting messages about the importance of technical versus editing skills required by employers. Russial compared the ads and the APME survey and found inconsistencies in the skills cited in the ads, including pagination, and the topics APME members said should be emphasized in journalism education. He noted that the demand for pagination experience appeared in almost 32 percent of the ads yet desktop publishing skills were mentioned by less than one-third of the APME survey respondents as a necessary skill.

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[27] Herbert J. Freudenberger, Burnout: The High Cost of Achievement. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, (1980).

[28] Stephen Nagy, "Stress and Burnout: Theory and Management." Capstone Journal of Education, 5: 29-36, (1984).

[29] See for example: W. D. Harrison, "Burnout: The Ease of the Helpless Helper." In Social Service Practice Relations. Monterey, Calf.: Brooks/Cole, (1983).
Stephen Nagy, S.A. Wilcoxon and A. D. Toppings, "Principal Leadership Behavior and Teacher Burnout." The Professional Educator, 11: 31-36, (1988).

[30] See Cook and Banks, 1993, Cook, Banks and Turner, 1993. Cook, Banks and Turner, "Job Stress, Hardiness and Health Factors in Reporters and Copy Editors," Presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Convention, Kansas City, August 1993.

[31] Russial, John T. "Beyond the Basics: Mixed Messages about Pagination and Other Skills." A paper presented at the Association for Education In Journalism and Mass Communication Convention, Atlanta, August 1994.

Auman[32] in her study "Seeing the Big Picture: The word and visual versatile editor of the 1990s" surveyed 92 editors and five newspaper consultants to determine what skills are necessary to succeed in the newsroom. She found that editors wanted employees who were versatile, who had the ability to both visual and verbal work.

In interviews with more than 60 copy editors over a ten year period, Solomon [33] found that although the video display terminal itself is now simply accepted as part of the job, pagination technique is found by some to be "problematic." One copy editor interviewed said the system caused "major grief".

Method

Sample

In the current study, the subjects were a total of 59 copy editors from 15 dailies of dissimilar size and publication schedules. This represents 59.59 percent of the total population of 99 copy editors at all 15 papers. There were 34 males and 25 females in the study. The maximum number of responses from any one newspaper in the study was 12 copy editors from one paper. Only full-time employees were surveyed. Surveys and tests were sent in the fall of 1993.

In addition, copy desk supervisors were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire that included qualitative response items on the difficulties of their jobs and how their jobs could be made easier.

This was not a study of attitudes of copy editors at a particular newspaper. Rather, the results look at the occupation of copy editing from all papers represented. Copy editors from the following newspapers with circulations noted participated in this study: *The Orange County* (Cal.) *Register*, 332,164; *The Los Angeles Times* (San Fernando Valley bureau), 1,146,631; Ventura (Calf.) *Star-Free Press*, 51,324; *Greeley* (Colo.) *Tribune*, 24, 167; Allentown (Pa.) *Morning-Call*, 137,108; *Denver Post*, 269,020; Houston *Post*, 300,121; Santa Barbara (Cal.) *News-Press*, 52,216; *Dayton* (Ohio) *Daily News*, 179,405; *Stuart* (Fla.) *News*, 30,885; Boulder (Colo.) *Daily Camera*, 33,865; (Colorado Springs) *Gazette Telegraph*, 101,175; *Anchorage Daily News*, 80,141; Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, 410,237; Owensboro, Ky., *Messenger-Inquirer*, 32, 745.[34]

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[32] Auman, Ann E., "Design Desks: Whay are more and more newappers adopting them?" Newspaper Research Journal, 15:116-127, (Spring 1994).

[33] Solomon, William S. "The Process of Technology: Newspaper Copy Editors Adapt to the VDT." The Journal of Mediated Communication, 9: 85-102, Summer 1994.

[34] Editor and Publisher Yearbook, 1993.

Instruments

The current study uses the Maslach Burnout Inventory as the dependent variable and the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire results, hardiness scores, and demographic variables as the independent variables.

Copy editors answered a demographic survey and completed three psychological tests, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Hardiness Scale and the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). The demographic survey featured items such as age, gender, title, income level, educational background, and years of experience. In addition, the demographic survey contained questions on health, substance use, computer and pagination system use, and career attitudes.

Career information items asked of the copy editors included the following statement: *Do you plan to leave journalism within the next five years?* The subject was asked to indicate yes or no. Other career items were obtained by a simple summative score on each of the following items, ranked from 1 to 5 on a Likert type scale: *I am satisfied with my present work; I am working in the kind of job I wanted when I was a student; The world of work is different from what I expected; If I had it to do over, I would still choose a career in journalism.*

Questions on substance use and health requested information about the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs, as well as exercise and overall health. Computer use questions looked at the subject's use of video display terminals and pagination systems.

One psychological test completed by copy editors was the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Scoring procedure for the MBI in this study was the frequency system. The MBI is divided into three separate subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Internal consistency reliability measures were reported by Maslach and Jackson as .90 for emotional exhaustion, .79 for depersonalization, and .71 for personal accomplishment. The highest reported level of criterion validity in the test manual was .68.[33] Scores at the upper end of the scale on emotional exhaustion (EE) and depersonalization (DP) indicate high levels of job burnout. Scores at the lower end of the scale on personal accomplishment (PA) indicate high levels of job burnout.[35]

The second psychological test given to copy editors was the Hardiness Scale, known as the Personal Views Survey. Hardiness is measured on the test with three subscales: (1) *Commitment* - The ability to commit to the task or project or relationship. This is not defined as "blind" commitment, rather a realistic commitment that can be re-evaluated if things change; (2) *Control* - The realistic knowledge and use of the amount of control or lack of control that one has in this and other situations. This includes the ability to obtain as much control as one needs for comfort or to remain committed; and (3) *Challenge* - The use of both commitment and control to see events, relationships, problems and opportunities as challenges rather than as trouble. Challenge assists individuals to accept errors as errors rather than as personal faults.[36]

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[35] Maslach and Jackson, 1986.

[36] Dane, Skip. "Hardiness Research." A paper published by the Hardiness Institute, Casper, Wyo., 1992.

These three subscales interact to comprise the condition known as hardiness. The test has been used on more than 21,000 subjects from many professions over the last four years. The Alpha coefficient is .92; the standard deviation is 9.60. The test/retest reliability based on more than 400 subjects show an item-to-item correlation of approximately .960 for the individual items.[36]

Copy editors also completed the LBDQ, a survey that asked respondents to describe the behavior of his or her supervisor. The reliability coefficient ranges from .60 to .85, depending on the profession and subscale measured.[37]

Results

The results of this study are presented in this section in both verbal and statistical formats. Table 1 present the means for the subscales of job burnout, for hardiness, age and total years of experience.

In a comparison of the means in this study presented in Table 1, and the mean scores of copy editors in Cook and Banks' meta-analysis, it is important to note the similarities. Scores on emotional exhaustion from both studies are identical, with scores on depersonalization and personal accomplishment falling within two points of one another.

The subjects were 58 percent male and 42 percent female. Of the sample, 39 percent planned to leave journalism within the next five years. Of the sample, 29 percent stated they were either very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with their choice of a newspaper career.

To measure the relationship between the major variables in this study and job burnout, a series of correlational analyses was utilized (SAS, 1989). In these analyses, the dependent variables were the subscales from the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Table 2 presents a series of correlations between job burnout and the following: personality hardiness, job satisfaction, health factors, demographic variables, and VDT usage. Only those variables that were significantly correlated with one or more of the burnout subscales were included.

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[37] Stogdill, 1963.

As indicated in Table 2, personality hardiness had a significant inverse relationship with both emotional exhaustion (EE) and depersonalization (DP). This indicates that subjects who scored higher on hardiness had lower levels of both EE and DP. Hardiness had a significant relationship with personal accomplishment (PA).

Job satisfaction had a significant inverse relationship with both EE and DP. This indicates that those subjects who had high levels of job satisfaction had lower levels of EE and DP. The variable "Quit", measured the frequency with which the individual thought about quitting his or her job. The greater the frequency of thinking about quitting, the higher the scores were on EE and DP.

Health was a measure of overall health. Overall health had a significant inverse relationship with EE and DP. This finding indicates that those subjects who reported better health had lower levels of EE and DP. The variable "Go to work when not feeling like it," measured how often the subject went to work when he or she did not feel like going. This variable had a significant relationship with EE and DP. Those subjects who indicated a high level of going to work when they did not feel like it also had high levels of EE and DP.

Illicit drug use had a significant inverse relationship with PA. Those subjects who indicated a higher level of illicit drug use had lower levels of PA.

Overtime indicated whether the subjects were paid for their overtime work. Not being paid had a significant inverse relationship with DP. Those not paid for overtime had lower depersonalization scores.

Of the 59 copy editors responding, 22 indicated they work on a pagination system, 34 do not. Three subjects did not respond to this question.

The variable "Uses pagination system," indicated whether the subject worked on an electronic pagination system. Not working on a pagination system had an inverse relationship with PA.

"Pagination makes job easier" was a variable that indicated whether the pagination system made the copy editor's job easier. This variable had a significant inverse relationship with EE and DP. Those subjects who indicated the pagination system made their jobs easier had lower levels of EE and DP.

"Pagination allows for more creativity" indicates whether pagination has allowed the copy editor to be more creative. Those subjects who agreed that it had allowed them to be more creative had significantly lower levels of EE.

"Pagination decreases deadline pressure" in Table 2 indicates whether pagination has decreased deadline pressure for the copy editor. Those subjects who agreed that it had decreased pressure had significantly lower levels of EE.

Those variables that did not have any significant relationship with job burnout were age, gender, educational levels, income, intention to leave the profession, frequency of sickness, sleeping problems, exercise levels, days missed from work, smoking, drinking alcohol, prescription drug use, working more than 40 hours per week, hours per day on the VDT, satisfaction with pagination, and total years of experience.

Table 3 presents the results of a correlation analysis for the subscales on the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire with the subscales of the MBI. Copy editors were asked to answer the LBDQ concerning their immediate desk supervisor.

The subscale Representation indicates the ability of the leader to speak and act as a representative of the group. This subscale had a significant relationship with PA.

The Demand Reconciliation subscale from the LBDQ indicates the ability to reconcile conflicting demands and to reduce disorder to the system of work. This variable had a significant inverse relationship with EE and a positive relationship with PA. Thus, those employees who saw this component in their manager had lower scores on EE and higher scores on PA.

The Tolerance for Uncertainty, another subscale of the LBDQ, had a significant positive relationship with PA. The Persuasiveness subscale also had a significant positive relationship with PA as did the Initiation of Structure subscale, which had a significant positive relationship with PA.

The Tolerance for Freedom subscale had a significant inverse relationship with EE and a significant positive relationship with PA. The Role Assumption subscale also had a significant positive relationship with PA. The Consideration subscale had a significant positive relationship with PA. The Production Emphasis subscale did not have a significant relationship with any of the MBI subscales.

The Predictive Accuracy subscale had a significant positive relationship with PA, as did the Integration subscale and the Superior Orientation subscale, which also had significant positive relationship with the sense of personal accomplishment.

Discussion

Consistent with findings in previous studies mentioned in the literature review , personality hardiness was found to affect the levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as well as personal accomplishment. Hardiness in personality seems to have an effect on how one scores on the MBI. This "hardy" personality type appears to be better able to cope with on-the-job stress.

Scores on the various subscales of the MBI also seem to be predictive of job attitudes. And not surprisingly, subjects who had high levels of job satisfaction also had lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Conversely, the subjects with higher levels of EE and DP also thought more frequently about quitting their jobs. These findings are consistent with others in journalism and other professions.

Health and illness also appear to be related to subscales of the MBI. Subjects who reported better health also had lower levels of EE and DP. In addition, those who said they often went to work when they did not feel like it had high levels of EE and DP. Illicit drug use was positively correlated with the subject's sense of personal accomplishment. Those who indicated a higher level of drug use also had lower levels of PA.

Usage of a pagination system also appears to affect copy editors' attitudes about their jobs as well as their levels of job burnout as measured on the MBI. Results show those who don't work on a pagination system have lower levels of personal accomplishment than those who do.

Among those who do use a pagination system, copy editors who said it made their jobs easier had lower levels of EE and DP. Following this finding , subjects who said pagination had allowed them to be more creative had significantly lower levels of EE. In addition, those who said pagination had decreased their work pressure also had lower levels of EE.

The leadership behaviors of the copy desk supervisor also appear to have an effect on copy editors' job attitudes and levels of job burnout. Eleven out of twelve of the LBDQ subscales correlated with the MBI subscale of personal accomplishment.

For example, if the supervisor was seen as a *representative* of the group, copy editors felt a stronger sense of personal accomplishment about their jobs. Tolerance for Uncertainty was also correlated with PA scores. If the copy editor saw the supervisor as able to *tolerate uncertainty* and postponement without anxiety or upset, then he or she also had a higher level of personal accomplishment. The supervisor's *Tolerance of Freedom* had a similar relationship. Copy editors who thought their supervisors allowed for initiative, decision, and action among group members had higher levels of PA and lower levels of emotional exhaustion.

Persuasiveness by the supervisor also was related to the copy editor's sense of personal accomplishment. Copy editors who saw their supervisors as using persuasion and argument effectively and having strong convictions had higher levels of PA.

Clearly defining roles and allowing followers to know what is expected (*Initiation of Structure*) were found to be related to the sense of personal accomplishment. The more the copy editor saw these qualities in the supervisor, the higher his or her PA score.

Another leader behavior, *Role Assumption,* also was found to be associated with the copy editor's sense of personal accomplishment. If the leader was seen to actively exercise his or her leadership role rather than surrendering leadership to others, the copy editor had a higher PA score. And if the supervisor was seen as regarding the comfort, well being, status, and contributions of copy editors (*Consideration*), the copy editor had a higher sense of personal accomplishment.

Supervisors who exhibited foresight and the ability to predict outcomes accurately (*Predictive Accuracy*) also appeared to support a greater sense of personal accomplishment among copy editors who work for them. Personal accomplishment also was greater among copy editors who saw their supervisors as maintaining a closely knit organization and resolving inter-member conflicts (*Integration*). And desk managers who had cordial relationships with superiors and had influence over them, striving for higher status (*Superior Orientation*) also seemed to engender a higher level of personal accomplishment among copy editors.

These findings are consistent with those in other professions as well as those measured by Cook and Banks in their 1992 study using the Work Environment Scale.

One conflicting finding is in the area of *Demand Reconciliation.* Copy editors who believed their supervisors reconciled conflicting demands and reduced disorder had higher levels of emotional exhaustion but also higher levels of personal accomplishment. This could be due to the fact that in order to reduce disorder, the leader must impose rules and regulations on employees

Conclusions

The relationship of the desk supervisor's leadership behaviors and the job attitudes and burnout levels of copy editors become clear in this study. In addition, anecdotal comments collected for this research point to the importance of the relationship between the copy editor and his or her supervisor.

"(The) copy desk seems to be misunderstood and therefore understaffed and underpaid. That translates to disgruntled and exhausted. Constant antagonism from reporters who don't understand how errors sometimes occur is tiring and non-constructive. Semi-productive co-workers drag down the whole desk. We should all be striving. I find design very rewarding, but am weighed down by a load of clerical duties because we haven't had a clerk in a year. The overtime is draining. If it weren't for my boss, I would have quit by now," said one female copy editor, age 29.

Understaffing, increased work volume, new technology, and ungrateful supervisors all spell trouble for an overburdened, burned-out copy desk. Many studies and anecdotal articles point to these and other problems for today's copy editors. Copy desk supervisors who participated in this study cited a lack of time to train copy editors, not enough copy editors to handle such tasks as zoned editions and increase technological demands due to pagination, poor salaries and, in some cases, no payment for overtime as common problems.

One female desk supervisor, age 40, said simply: "Upper-level management has no idea what the desk does, how labor-intensive 'improvements' are, and consequently piles on more and more work. Folks are overworked and I'm stuck in the middle. (My job would be easier) if upper management truly appreciated copy editors and recognized the desk for what it is -- the backbone of the operation."

Many efforts to alleviate stress and burnout among copy editors may seem like common sense, but this study indicates such effort demand increased attention and urgency from newspaper management and copy desk supervisors alike. The relationship of job burnout and job satisfaction is clear. The task for copy desk supervisors is to adapt and nurture positive leadership qualities as one step to avoid job burnout and stress among copy editors who work for them.

Concrete steps newspaper management can take are:

- Give copy desk supervisors enough authority so that copy editors feel that dealing with supervisors has a legitimate chance of effecting change. Encourage supervisors to represent the interests of copy editors; do not dismiss their concerns.
- Do not countenance poor supervision on the copy desk. An authoritarian or ungrateful manager can lower the morale of the whole desk. Hire supervisors who garner the respect of their staff.
- Rotate copy editors through pagination and training in other new technologies so that no one feels left behind by technology and so that more empathy is felt for those doing different jobs.
- Increase staffing on the copy desk commensurate with staff decreases in engraving and paste-up departments made possible by new technologies.
- Provide continuing training so that new employees become well-versed in all areas of copy desk responsibility.
- Pay overtime wages.

Concrete steps copy editors can take are:

- Tell supervisors what is needed to get the job done.
- Train for new duties. Think of new technologies such as pagination as opportunities for lifelong learning.
- Take time to do a professional job in which you can take pride.
- When burned out, move on. Journalism is good training for other careers.
- Shrug off criticism that are not well founded.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle outside work.

Each of these recommendations is based on findings in this study. Beyond this, it should be noted that some aspects of disgruntlement on the copy desk may be endemic to the profession. Copy desk work attracts perfectionists; the nature of the work is to find and correct problems. This will never change. But good leadership practices may go a long way toward helping copy editors be healthy, productive employees.

Table 1

Means for Major Variables

Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	23.48
Depersonalization (DP)	11.12
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	28.27
Hardiness	70.60
Age	39.18
Experience	16.59 years

Table 2

Significant correlates with job burnout

	EE	DP	PA
Hardiness r= p=	-.42 .001	-.54 .0001	.28 .034
Job Satisfaction	-.57 .0001	-.42 .003	.17 .21
Quit within 5 yrs.	.67 .0001	.52 .001	-.15 .2481
Health	-.501 .0001	-.36 .0074	.08 .543
Goes to work when not feeling like it	.71 .0001	.28 .0394	-.158 .247
Illicit drug use	.043 .748	.004 .974	-.277 .040
Paid for overtime	-.204 .142	-.323 .0207	.3111 .0248
Uses pagination system	.091 .5147	.070 .617	-.281 .0433
Pagination makes job easier	-.619 .0007	-.465 .0192	.328 .101
Pagination allows for more creativity	-.454 .019	-.113 .5886	.0117 .954
Pagination has decreased deadline pressure	-.517 .006	-.3391 .0972	.077 .707

Table 3

Correlates of Job Burnout

	EE	DP	PA
Representation r=	.140	.106	.410
p=	.312	.345	.002
Demand Reconciliation	-.429	-.175	.386
	.001	.213	.004
Tolerance for Uncertainty	-.265	-.011	.273
	.052	.932	.047
Persuasion	-.233	-.147	.490
	.089	.298	.0002
Initiation of Structure	-.066	-.056	.439
	.635	.693	.0010
Tolerance of Freedom	-.407	-.178	.449
	.002	.205	.0007
Role Assumption	.001	-.024	.293
	.988	.862	.033
Consideration	-.258	-.136	.429
	.058	.333	.001
Production Emphasis	.163	.026	.258
	.238	.854	.061
Predictive Accuracy	-.204	-.093	.397
	.137	.508	.003
Integration	-.242	-.093	.454
	.076	.508	.0006
Superior Orientation	.065	-.006	.428
	.636	.963	.001

Newspaper Division

HOW JOURNALISTS AT MONOPOLY DAILIES VIEW NEWSPAPER COMPETITION

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Accepted for presentation at the annual convention of the
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication,
Washington, D.C., August 1995

HOW JOURNALISTS AT MONOPOLY DAILIES VIEW NEWSPAPER COMPETITION

Arguably the most important issue and trend in the newspaper industry during the last half century has been the decline in the number of competitive daily newspaper cities in the United States. Today only 11 cities remain where two or more separately owned and operated papers battle for circulation and advertising dollars. The number has dropped dramatically since 1986 when there were 29 cities with competing dailies.[1]

Six of the cities with competing newspapers are major metropolitan areas: Boston, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C. The size of these markets is an important factor in sustaining more than one daily. In addition, there are five small and mid-size localities: Columbia, Mo., Green Bay, Wis.; Kingsport, Tenn.; Trenton, N.J.; and Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Observers say it is impossible to identify similarities that indicate why these half dozen communities have competing newspapers while the many hundreds of other communities have only one daily. The greatest common denominator may be that each market has unusual characteristics that help its dailies continue to publish. Columbia would not have two dailies if not for the Missourian that has operated as a teaching tool of the University of Missouri School of

Journalism since early this century. In another instance, the Citizens' Voice of Wilkes-Barre started as a union paper during a strike and has become a strong competitor against the Times Leader, owned by Capital Cities/ABC Inc.[2]

Some competing dailies seem to persevere on tenacity alone. In Green Bay the family-owned News-Chronicle is sustaining large financial losses in its competitive struggle with media giant Gannett.[3] However, the underdog Arkansas Democrat unexpectedly prevailed in late 1991 after a long-fought circulation battle with Gannett's Arkansas Gazette. During the fierce competition between the Little Rock papers, readers benefitted from broadened local coverage and sharpened political distinctions which challenged assumptions that daily newspapers are characterized by sameness. But in the end the demise of the Gazette, which 35 years earlier had played a courageous role in a key integration conflict, created yet another one-daily town.[4]

Analyst Kevin Gruneich of First Boston Corp. theorizes that competition can survive only where one newspaper is clearly dominant and the other accepts a secondary position -- "with fewer readers, fewer expenses, fewer resources and lesser profit." He mentions Chicago as an example of a feasible two-paper city, where the Tribune is the principal paper and the Sun-Times has assumed a secondary role.[5]

A growing number of observers are not sure that any city can support two profitable newspapers indefinitely. Economies of scale, changing lifestyles and declining readership habits practically dictate that only one daily can survive. But explanations for the loss of competition do not mitigate questions about effects of the trend. For years scholars have attempted to determine whether two dailies provide superior journalistic performance as compared with one or whether the greater financial strength of a monopoly newspaper permits it to do a better job than if it faced competition. However, no published research could be found that dealt with journalists' assessments of newspaper competition.

An objective of this national study was to learn what effects journalists at monopoly newspapers perceived that daily newspaper competition has on editorial performance. Another aim was to determine their view of whether the broadcast media are an adequate substitute for competing newspapers. Due to the preponderance of monopoly newspapers, it was determined that the responses of journalists at such papers would be a highly representative indicator of opinions in newsrooms across the country.

Economic barriers

Monopoly in the newspaper industry exists when a daily operates as the sole newspaper published within its primary market area. In such a situation there is little direct competition for newspaper advertising and circulation. Newspaper monopoly is not absolute because of competition from other media and dailies in other cities. However, barrier to entry into a daily newspaper's primary market is so great that the monopoly remains highly secure. In terms of market power, all dailies operate as near monopolies.

This occurs because newspaper markets are fixed in contiguous geographic areas by retail advertising and local news demands.

The rise of newspaper monopoly can be largely explained in terms of a couple of economic factors. The trend is seen as a direct and inevitable outcome of pervasive economies of scale that give a substantial profit advantage to large circulation newspapers.[6] First-copy costs for newspapers are high because the costs of equipment and staff to produce the first issue are fixed. Costs of additional copies come only from ink, paper, energy and additional production-staff time. Therefore, the average per copy costs of newspapers decrease rapidly with the increase in the number printed. The overall effect is sharply declining expenses across all stages of production.

Another contributor to single-newspaper cities is the circulation spiral.[7] The newspaper that moves ahead in circulation attracts a disproportionate percentage of advertising linage in its market. Consequently, the trailing newspaper generates less revenue and has fewer resources to devote to improving and promoting its product. The paper is increasingly less attractive to readers, causing a continuing loss in advertising and circulation until it can no longer survive.

The detrimental effect of the circulation spiral is evident from tracking data. Between 1976 and 1985, the 20 competing dailies that ceased publication averaged only a 32% share of circulation with the leading newspaper in their markets.[8] In 1986, a quarter of the number-two dailies in the 28 remaining competitive cities had less than a 32% circulation share.[9] By 1994, trailing dailies with less than a 32% market share were found in half of the 12 competitive newspaper cities still in existence. Three of these pronounced circulation discrepancies were in the major metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C. Further, competition in five of the other six competitive markets was in danger. These statistics appear to foretell the virtual end of head-to-head newspaper competition in the United States.

Literature Review

The attention of many empirical researchers has focused on whether competition among daily newspapers leads to differences in content. Some researchers argue that because journalists share professional standards of what is news and because competing newspapers need to cater to a wide range of readers, competing newspapers will produce a similar product.[10] Others contend that although shared values about what is news may limit editorial distinctions, competing newspapers will differentiate their content in order to capture readers.[11]

The bulk of studies on newspaper competition over the past 45 years reported that competition has little impact on content.[12] One explanation for this finding is that historically researchers tended to look at the geographic and topic allocation of news to determine the relationship between competition and content. They also often assumed that newspapers either had competition or they did not, instead of defining competition as a matter of degree. However, several longitudinal studies have found that periods of intense competition resulted in content changes when compared with periods of no and slight competition.[13] When a newspaper competes from a strongly dominant position, its content is only negligibly affected by the presence of the smaller paper in the market.

Since the mid-1980s most research in the area has shown a correlation between intensity of competition and the amount of money spent to produce a newspaper. Litman and Bridges developed the "financial commitment theory" to explain increased investment in coverage during times of intense competition. They discovered that competing dailies tended to devote more space to their news hole and to subscribe to more wire services in an effort to improve their product.[14]

Lacy found that as intensity of competition increased newspapers employed more reporters and subscribed to more wire services.[15] He also has shown that intensity of competition is positively related to the percentage of the news section devoted to local news and the percentage of the total newspaper devoted to news and editorial content.[16] Increased competitive intensity also reportedly has prompted newspapers to increase their use of graphics and color on their front pages.[17]

These results indicate that the effects of competition come not through the distribution of news along geographic lines but through the amount of money spent on content. The geographic emphasis of news is consistent so newspapers can remain substitutes for each other by providing relatively similar products. The increased expenditure on reporters, wire services and visual communication represents an effort to differentiate one newspaper from another. The consequence is that competing dailies appear to surpass monopoly newspapers in quality of information -- such as depth and completeness of coverage and usefulness of content to the reader.

The presence of radio, television and cable in a market has been found to have little influence on the allocation of resources by newspaper management. Allocation of resources include the number of reporters and wire services, and space allotted to news. This strongly suggests that newspapers and the broadcast media compete in separate content markets.[18]

Several studies have maintained that the loss of daily newspaper competition is mitigated by increased competition from other media that provide news and opinion.[19] However, instead of acting as significant news competitors, other media appear to supplement newspapers. Clearly, television stations report some of the same local news as newspapers because television stations stress local coverage[20] and tend to differentiate their coverage from other local stations.[21] But television is distinguished from newspapers by technology and has limited time to air local news. Thus, television stations provide a timely digest of the day's major stories but are no substitute for the in-depth coverage of daily newspapers.

Considering the mixed results of the sundry content studies, it should be illuminating to obtain for the first time journalists' impressions of daily newspaper competition. Journalists on monopoly newspapers were queried because of the dearth of competing dailies. The research questions that guided the analysis were:

1) What impact do journalists on monopoly dailies perceive newspaper competition has on editorial performance?

2) Do they believe the broadcast media offer an acceptable alternative to newspaper competition?

Methods

Sampling was carried out in two stages. First, U.S. daily newspapers listed in the 1993 Editor & Publisher International Yearbook were divided into three categories according to circulation size. Small applied to less than 40,000, medium was 40,000 to 100,000 and large was more than 100,000. Each circulation category was treated as a separate sampling frame to maximize representation of journalists in each circulation group.

Seventy-five monopoly newspapers were selected by a systematic random sampling technique, and 52 agreed to participate, a 69% newspaper response rate. Large newspapers made up 23% of the sample, medium-sized papers accounted for 41% and small papers were 36%.

For the second stage of sampling, each newspaper was asked to provide the names and job titles of its full-time editorial employees who fit the definition of journalist for the study. The definition excluded sports and special section writers and editors, photographers and artists.

One hundred names were randomly selected from large newspapers, and 50 from medium-sized papers. If newspapers had smaller staffs then these, or if papers had small circulations, all eligible staff members were included.

Questionnaires were sent during winter 1993. Two mailings elicited responses from 1,667 journalists for a 62% response rate. The breakdown of participation by journalists was large papers, 64%; medium papers, 67%; and small papers 59%.

In an effort to determine whether competition is viewed differently by journalists in monopoly markets with different newspaper backgrounds, comparisons were made of three important factors that might influence their perceptions: job status, experience in monopoly and competitive newspaper markets and newspaper circulation size.

With regard to job status, the titles of editor and reporter were used to specify managerial and non-managerial rank. Sixty-four percent of the journalists fit the non-managerial designation, including copy editors. The different roles of editors and reporters are clearly defined at newspapers. Reporters gather news and editors establish policies that determine the criteria for news decisions. Although editors normally have reporting backgrounds, they operate more often as managers than as journalists.

Results

Sixty-two percent of the journalists on monopoly newspapers were male, and most were more than 30 years old. The majority had worked on newspapers for more than 10 years, and about half had spent more than five years at their present paper. Six in 10 journalists were paid between $30,000 and $55,000. However, nearly a quarter made less than $30,000, and only 12% earned more than $55,000. Companion data indicates that monopoly journalists tended to receive lower salaries than colleagues on the few remaining competing dailies.

Virtually all of the respondents were college graduates; 23% held advanced degrees. Communication-related fields were studied by two-thirds of the college graduates and by half of those who earned a graduate degree.

Impact of competition

Eighty percent of the respondents contended that competing daily newspapers provide greater diversity of news than monopoly newspapers. Similarly, three-quarters said competing papers offer greater diversity of editorial opinions.

Fifty-two percent of the journalists indicated that competing dailies provide higher quality local news coverage than monopoly newspapers; only 20% disagreed. On the other hand, the premise that competing newspapers more often sensationalize the news than monopoly papers was adhered to by half of the respondents. A quarter disagreed.

Journalists were fairly evenly divided about whether monopoly newspapers can better withstand advertisers' efforts to manage the news than can competing papers. Thirty-six percent agreed, compared with 30 percent who disagreed.

Monopoly dailies are more likely than competing newspapers to become complacent and adopt the interests of the community establishment according to 70% of the journalists; only 16% indicated otherwise.

The argument that the broadcast media -- television, cable and radio -- offer an acceptable local news alternative to newspaper competition was rejected by six in 10 respondents. In fact, 80% of those surveyed claimed that the public is best served when separately owned and operated dailies publish in the same city.

Journalists who supported intracity newspaper competition were asked about ways to foster it (Table 1). Half of them maintained that competitive market forces should be allowed to work without government interference. However, a third approved of strict antitrust enforcement in the small number of cities where direct newspaper competition still exists. A similar percentage embraced short-term tax breaks and subsidies to help establish new daily newspapers in monopoly markets and low interest loans and investment incentives for secondary papers to help them expand their markets and improve their ability to survive. Relatively few expressed interest in developing quasi-public newspapers similar to public broadcasting operations.

Overall, journalists at monopoly newspapers contended that competing dailies are superior editorial products. It is not surprising therefore that nearly three-quarters of those in the study would prefer to work for a competing daily; only 6% preferred a monopoly newspaper. Nevertheless, some of the attitudes of journalists were significantly affected by their professional backgrounds and the circulation size of their newspapers.

Reporters were more likely than editors to agree that competing dailies provide greater diversity of news and editorial opinions and higher caliber local news coverage than monopoly newspapers (Table 2). In addition, they more often maintained that newspapers facing direct competition are less likely to become complacent and adopt the interests of the community establishment.

Journalists with previous work experience on a competing newspaper were more likely than their colleagues whose experience was solely on monopoly newspapers to agree that competing dailies offer greater editorial quality, diversity and vigor (Table 3). However, they also more often contended that papers in competitive markets are more likely to sensationalize the news.

Some differences in perceptions were evident among journalists based on their newspapers' circulation size (Table 4). Those on large and medium-sized newspapers were more inclined than their colleagues on small papers to agree that competing dailies provide greater diversity of news and editorial opinions than monopoly newspapers. They were also more likely to maintain that the public is best served when separately owned and operated dailies publish in the same market and tended to indicate a greater preference for working on a competing newspaper.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study explored how journalists in monopoly newspaper markets viewed daily newspaper competition. Journalists on monopoly papers were surveyed because their answers accurately reflect viewpoints in an industry dominated by monopoly. Responses strongly supported recent empirical evidence that suggests newspaper competition improves news content. In addition, the broadcast media were not seen as a viable news option to competing dailies.

Most journalists held that competing dailies provide greater diversity of news content and editorial opinions than monopoly newspapers. The presumption is that a paper in a competitive market wants to give its readers information not found in its rival. The result should be that competing newspapers report on more matters and offer more diverse opinions on how to deal with those matters. But although competing newspapers must differentiate themselves, they also must remain substitutes. In an intensely competitive situation, this means more money to match coverage and to provide different coverage. According to the literature, the most prevalent differences occur in the areas of staff coverage, local coverage and editorial comment. The similarities mainly appear in the area of geographic and topic distribution of coverage other than local news.

Proponents of newspaper monopoly argue that their civic obligation and commercial desire to reach a broad readership prompts them to publish diverse news and editorials. Overlooked is the concern shared by most respondents in this study about the possible willingness of monopolist publishers to become complacent and to adopt the interests of the community establishment. More than a half century ago it was conjectured that newspaper monopoly promotes journalistic complacency: "Lack of competition often means careless and inaccurate reporting, failure to report all newsworthy events and a tendency to 'play safe.'"[22]

Respondents tended to indicate that competing dailies produce higher quality local news coverage than monopoly papers. It is argued that lack of direct newspaper competition eliminates the economic incentive to improve the caliber of news coverage. Instead the most expedient action that monopoly newspapers can take is to cut news costs and thereby increase their profits. Notwithstanding, it is difficult to determine whether competition results in a better product. But recent research has found that competition usually increases the amount of money spent on news and thereby increases the likelihood of greater quality and depth of coverage.[23] More systematic study of newspaper content in monopoly and the few remaining competitive markets is needed. Further, additional efforts to adapt economic theories and concepts to the analysis of news content would be useful.[24]

A small majority of journalists contended that competing dailies sensationalize the news more often than monopoly papers. Their contention is supported by evidence showing dailies faced with direct newspaper competition devote a larger portion of their news hole to sensational content.[25] Nevertheless, these findings should not be interpreted as reflecting policy decisions by newspaper executives in competitive markets. It may be that competitive pressures cause more sensational treatment of the news no matter a paper's designated policy.

The idea that the public is best served when separately owned and operated dailies publish in the same city was agreed with by most respondents. The loss of a competing newspaper results in a substantial decrease in the amount of news and opinion provided to a community. Two newspapers publish more news than a single newspaper no matter whether the survivor increases its coverage after attaining a monopoly.[26] Another undesirable consequence is the loss of circulation in the former competitive market. Some readers stop subscribing to a newspaper after the demise of one of the competing papers.[27]

Only a third of the journalists at monopoly newspapers agreed that television, cable and radio are an adequate local news substitute for daily newspaper competition. While technological innovations have greatly increased the types of media available to a community, the electronic media augment daily newspaper journalism rather than offer an alternative news source. Further, it appears that broadcast and cable outlets do not exert the same sort of competitive pressure on financial commitment by newspaper management as newspaper rivalry.[28]

The professional backgrounds of respondents helped to shape their opinions about newspaper competition. The perceptions of the editors and reporters from monopoly papers were largely shaped by their number of years of newspaper experience. Usually, reporters have worked in the business a shorter time than editors and have been exposed to less professional socialization which increases acceptance of the structure and performance of one's organization.

This would seem to help explain why in some instances reporters held more positive attitudes toward newspapers with competition than their editors. Reporters were more inclined to attribute greater editorial quality, diversity and vigor to competing papers than to monopoly ones.

Journalists who had worked at one time in a competitive newspaper market were more inclined to rate competing papers more highly than those who had experience only in monopoly markets. At the same time journalists with experience on competing dailies more often suggested that such papers are more prone to sensationalism than monopoly papers. Yet, it appears from this study that the greater the familiarity of journalists with newspaper competition the greater their support for it.

Similarly, respondents on large and medium-sized newspapers placed greater value on competition than their colleagues on small papers. Those on larger newspapers were more apt to prefer to work on a competing daily and more likely to contend that a community is best served by such competition. They may more often perceive societal and journalistic advantages of newspaper competition because they are more likely to work in highly competitive media markets and to have worked previously on a competing newspaper.

In addition, larger newspapers in pluralistic communities are said to emphasize diversity in their news coverage and editorial opinions whereas small papers in more homogeneous communities tend to focus heavily on "consensus" news and views.[29] The greater agreement among journalists on larger newspapers that competing dailies are more likely than monopoly papers to stress diversity may further account for the disparity in attitudes between the two groups of journalists.

Finally, it is noteworthy that journalists on monopoly newspapers were likely to contend that competing dailies offer superior journalistic performance. This finding is especially relevant in light of recent content studies suggesting that the decline of newspaper competition has lowered the quality of news coverage. Looking ahead, it is highly probable that the technology that produces economies of scale and the dependence of newspapers on advertising for revenue spell the end of head-to-head newspaper competition in the near future. Therefore, it is in the public interest for monopoly newspapers to concentrate on becoming better papers. Such a commitment is also in the industry's interest as good newspapers bring better financial performance in the long run than poor ones.

NOTES

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3. Anderson, "Two-Newspaper Towns."

4. Tim W. Ferguson, "And the Winner in Little Rock Was . . . Not Gannett," The Wall Street Journal, Nov. 26, 1991, p. A15.

5. Gene Goltz, "Where Newspapers Compete," presstime 8 (November 1986): 38.

6. See James N. Rosse, "The Decline of Direct Newspaper Competition," Journal of Communication 30 (1980): 65-71; Benjamin M. Compaine, "Newspapers," in Christopher H. Sterling, Thomas Guback and J. Kendrick Noble Jr., eds. Who Owns the Media? Concentration of Ownership in the Mass Communications Industry, second edition (White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, 1982a), Chapter 2.

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RULES FOR GETTING REAL:
HOW ONE NEWSPAPER'S EDITORS TALK ABOUT "REAL PEOPLE"

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Submitted for consideration to AEJMC Newspaper Division
for the AEJMC annual meeting, August 1995

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of newspaper industry concerns about connecting with readers as news consumers and citizens, this study examines how editors at one Midwestern newspaper talk about "real people" as their audience and as an important category of story sources. Shimanoff's theory of communication rules is used to construct the unwritten rules the editors use to discuss "RPs." Among other things, editors emphasize "RPs" as non-official sources and desire to empower readers.

RULES FOR GETTING REAL:
HOW ONE NEWSPAPER'S EDITORS TALK ABOUT "REAL PEOPLE"

Two overlapping newspaper industry trends of the last several years reflect an intense interest among newspaper managers in connecting more strongly with the public. The first trend, the widespread effort to appeal more strongly to reader interests, comes as newspapers fight declining or stagnant circulation.[1] Concern about flagging readership and circulation topped managers' lists of worries in national surveys by the newspaper innovation center New Directions for News in 1990, '92, and '93.[2] Amid this concern, newspapers have redesigned with readers' advice, sponsored call-in-to-the-editor nights, and held reader award contests, among other things.[3] Gannett's News 2000 program and Knight-Ridder's 25/43 project have changed content and presentation to draw greater reader interest.[4]

The second trend, the movement known as "public" or "civic" journalism[5], involves efforts to reconnect with readers as citizens in order to engage them more actively in discussion of public problems and solutions.[6] A growing number of newspapers as well as broadcast stations have, among other approaches, held public issues forums and focus groups, and conducted polling and in-depth interviews to listen to the public and to open dialogue between citizens and government and non-government leaders.[7]

At the center of both of these trends is the audience -- whether viewed as news consumers or citizens (or both). Against this backdrop, this study examines a key aspect of the way editors at one newspaper talk about their audience. These editors, in a Midwestern college town, have a name for their intended audience and for many of their news sources: "RPs," or real people. Observations of editors' meetings at this newspaper, fleshed out through interviews with six key editors, show that this idea forms an important component of these editors' news judgment and shapes their work with reporters. The paper's managing editor said the term RPs has become something approaching "the mantra of the newsroom" and that the accompanying focus on "grass-roots opinion and perspective is a thing that drives our coverage these days, probably more than any other single philosophy."

Although some of the editors interviewed noted that journalism's -- and their own -- interest in "real people" is not entirely new, this newspaper's emphasis is notable in light of the current interest in connecting with readers and therefore merits attention.

Using Shimanoff's theory of communication rules[8], this study attempts to identify the unwritten rules that the editors at this newspaper use in their decisions and actions related to RPs. Studies more than 15 years ago by Gans[9], Tuchman[10], and numerous others[11] explored the newsmaking process, primarily from a sociological perspective. More recent studies have also examined aspects of newsmaking including sources.[12] Also relevant to this study on "real people" are recent works by Yankelovich[13] and

Greider[14] on experts and insiders as a barrier to public participation in government.

This study, though limited to one newspaper, advances earlier ones in two ways:

(1) It looks at the newsmaking process in relation to sources and audience in terms of a topic, "real people," directly relevant to the current trends in the newspaper industry.

(2) It does so using a rules perspective from communication theory to look at communication about this aspect of newsmaking.[15]

After detailing my research method, I will focus on how editors define RPs and how they make decisions with an eye to RPs as subjects and sources, and as audience. Along the way, I will assess these findings in light of some of the literature cited above and current industry trends. I will then return briefly to the current context for the study -- and to the potential value of Shimanoff's theory for newspaper research -- in light of my conclusions.

Method

The site for this study was the newsroom of a daily newspaper in a Midwestern college town; I will refer to the paper as the Gazette.[16] The paper's managing editor has overall responsibility for the daily operations of the newsroom. He supervises four city editors responsible for a staff of local news reporters. Three news editors share responsibility over the course of each week for culling national and world news from wire services and for overseeing the design and final editing of each day's news pages. Additional editors supervise sports and some feature pages such as food. The Gazette has a strong tradition of reporter training and coaching.

Observations focused on "budget" meetings held twice each weekday (once on Fridays), at which editors discuss news for the next day's paper. Discussion at the meetings, where 10 or more people were usually present, centers on the budget list of stories that may be available for the next day's paper.

I observed a total of 11 meetings on six days between February 15 and 28, 1995. Rough field notes were taken at the meetings, then typed into expanded notes. I interviewed the managing editor, the four city editors, and one of the news editors for 30 to 45 minutes each between February 22 and March 13. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.[17]

I entered the observations considering the general question of how Gazette editors discuss and make decisions about news stories at their meetings, with a particular interest in what criteria they use to make judgments about what to run in the paper and what to give priority.[18] The meetings seemed to offer the best opportunity to observe concentrated decision-making and hear rationales for decisions. I hoped to hear explicit discussions of ethics or values; they did not arise frequently enough for broad analysis. However, the term and idea "RP" arose often enough even in only six days of meetings that I felt I had a firm basis for focusing on this theme -- and had the backdrop of current interest in which to do so. My first three interviews were wide-ranging but included questions that confirmed and explored the RP theme. I focused the last three interviews on this topic in order to explore it in more depth.

Evidence related to RPs from the observations and interviews was used to develop tentative rules. These rules were modified based on negative cases and on member checks[19] with four of the six editors interviewed, including the one who introduced the term "RP" in the newsroom and is most strongly associated with it.

RPs and the Gazette

A number of rules related to RPs emerged from observations and interviews. I will examine these rules after looking at the definition of an RP that appears to lie behind these behavior rules.[20]

How Editors Define an RP

Evidence from the three interviews that focused on the RP theme points to a definition of RPs as people in the role of ordinary citizens affected by actions of officials or other power-holders. In the words of Ellen, a city editor, an RP is "somebody who is down in the trenches of life, so to speak." (Ellen introduced the term RP from another newspaper to the *Gazette* and has a strong, long-running desire to see RPs in the paper; she is often a catalyst for discussion of RPs. She also helped to direct a public journalism project for the paper.)

As Anthony, another city editor, put it, an RP is "the average citizen, the average person out on the street, the person that's gonna be affected by a decision that's made by a governmental entity or a business or . . . some entity like that." Bob, the managing editor, referred to reporting that uses RPs as "grass-roots up reporting, in which we try whenever we can to look at issues through the eyes and through the words of the ordinary people who are affected by it one way or another." Bob drew a distinction between those ordinary people and power-holders:

> I think in general, we kind of divide the world into the "RPs" and the "white shirts" -- the white shirts being the people who hold office or in some other way hold power, the RPs being the people on whom or toward whom or in some cases against whom the white shirts employ that power.

Besides officials, he cited as power-holders:

> the business power structure, the big developers, the bankers, the lobbyists in [the state capital], whether they're the lobbyists for the state medical association or for the insurance industry or the tobacco industry or any others, the people who run the university, just in general the people who have either political or social or economic ability to influence the lives of the rest of us, of the real people, as we choose to call them.

Clear lines, however, are difficult to draw. Bob noted that people with expert knowledge (but not necessarily powerful positions) are a third category of sources for newspaper and community dialogue. Anthony noted that even people who work for a government entity may lack power. And a doctor who might be powerful in some circumstances might be considered an RP if he or she were going to be affected by a medical agency's decision.

Despite these nuances, however, the thrust of the definition is toward RPs as ordinary citizens who do not hold power.

This definition is interesting in light of the arguments of Yankelovich and Greider. Yankelovich, a pollster with long experience as an observer of politics, writes that the American dream "of having a say on the fundamental issues that shape people's lives" is threatened by "the eroding ability of the American public to participate in the political decisions that affect their lives." This ability has been eroded by the increasing role of experts in government.[21] Greider, writing from a Washington journalist's perspective, attempts to show how insiders belie the traditional conception that the public has a genuine role in democracy.[22] These arguments suggest that the world is, in fact, divided between the powerful and the RPs, who indeed are disempowered.

Rules for RPs

Shimanoff defines a rule as "a followable prescription that indicates what behavior is obligated, preferred, or prohibited in certain contexts."[23] Formally, a rule should begin with an "if" clause specifying the domain in which the rule applies, followed by a "then" clause "that specifies the nature of the prescription, by way of a prescriptive modal (e.g., must, must not, should)," and "the behavior that is prescribed."[24] In order for rules to be inferred from behavior, the behavior must be controllable (one "can physically perform or not perform" it[25]), criticizable ("open to evaluation," positively or negatively[26]), and contextual ("recurs in similar contexts"[27]).

The rules that emerged from observation and interviews can be generally categorized as relating to RPs as subjects or sources and RPs as audience.[28]

RPs As Subjects or Sources

The broad rule here is: 1. If a story is written and edited by Gazette reporters and editors, they should include RPs as subjects or sources.[29] This rule is supported by the data that underlie a more specific rule:

A. Reporters/editors should include RPs in addition to officials and experts. The interviews suggest strongly that officials and experts should be part of news stories, according to the rules of the Gazette. Said Bob:

> It's a danger, and it's a danger that we occasionally fall victim to, that you concentrate so heavily on trying to represent the views of the ordinary people, that you may leave out or not give adequate attention to the views of people who may really understand the problem better, have some expert background, and may really be able to contribute to the solution.

As Ellen put it, RPs are only one piece of the puzzle, a puzzle that needs to include expert knowledge:

> If you take the RP and you slip it into the jigsaw puzzle, then you, if you've just got an RP then all you've got is one jigsaw puzzle piece, right? And that doesn't make any sense, because where does it fit in the wall? So what you do, is you go and get some research, some statistics, some figures and numbers, and you put it around that, and then you've got a picture that makes sense. That's how I visualize it.

At the same time, however, RPs are a crucial piece. Said Mary:

> We've found that through repeated surveys and research that

> people want not only to understand the issue but hear what people just like them have to say -- as long as it's credible and you've got an expert or you've got an official -- you've gotta have someone give the, quote, official stand, but then a reaction especially: "Well, how does that make you feel?" or "What's that gonna do to your farm?" or "How much you gonna pay for that street?"

This desire to include RPs in stories emerged at one budget meeting in a discussion about plans to cover the local congressman's press conference. Ellen suggested the reporter talk to non-politicians and non-journalists who might be at the press conference -- an idea supported by one of the news editors. She complained that the Gazette is always getting officials and said she wanted to hear the story from non-officials.

Several comments suggest that the editors believe that reporters and editors should view RPs as providing a more accurate understanding of how actions or situations will affect ordinary citizens than do officials and experts. Although Bob's and Ellen's comments suggested that experts may understand a problem broadly, editors seem to favor RPs for providing a sense of effects of events or situations on ordinary individuals. Jack, the news editor interviewed, put it this way:

> Too often when you do stories you do the round up [of] the usual suspects and interview them. Well, how these issues affect people -- in order to report that fairly and accurately you've gotta go out and find some, and it's too often that reporters stay in the newsroom and don't actually go out to the scene and take a look at it.

Two comments by Mary reflected some skepticism among the editors about how forthcoming officials will be about what they do know:

> Every story that we write, I mean if it's worth putting in our paper, affects those real people, and experts and officials can blow smoke and put up that smoke-screen, and

> say, "Oh, this is wonderful, beautiful, or this is the end of the world as we know it," but when you get down to -- people are interested in hearing what their neighbors have to say.
>
> . . . People like to hear that regular person, if you will, say, in plain words what the officials and experts are purporting, and in seventeen-syllable words.

Anthony showed the same skepticism about officials:

> If you're talking to real people, and how certain things are affecting them, then you're gonna get a basic understanding of where they're coming from. You don't have to like it, you don't have to agree with it, but you do have to get out there and talk to them and try to understand where they're coming from. And doing that, I think, is the best way to be a reporter. Because if you're sitting on top of the politicians and bureaucrats, they're only gonna tell you what's gonna benefit them.

Thus, while the editors see a place for official comment, they do not see it as conveying the full picture of some events.

Their skepticism, viewed in light of the arguments of Yankelovich and Greider, may indeed be justified: Experts have power and have an interest in keeping it, not handing it over to RPs. (However, the editors' comments do not seem to acknowledge that RPs, too, may have selfish motives as sources.)

The editors' emphasis on RPs as sources stands in notable contrast to the findings of newsmaking studies of sourcing. In a study of the contribution of electronic information technologies to breaking stories at large newspapers, Hansen et al. concluded: "Reporters turn to the same official sources as were apparent in the classic newsmaking studies. Even though they use more of these officials in each story, the range of sources has not expanded."[30] Although the study of the Gazette did not systematically analyze the content of stories themselves, editors' views of what that content should be strongly suggest that the Gazette is shifting away from dependence on official sources -- or at least attempting to do so.

In some situations, the Gazette editors appear to believe it is best not to use an RP -- or at least acceptable not to. These rules are each supported by the opinions of only one or two of the editors but are not contradicted by the others, and were confirmed using member checks.

B1) If using RPs would be in poor taste or insensitive, reporters/editors should not include them. Said Ellen:

> When you go out to a fire and a little child's just been burned to death, I would have a real problem with a reporter getting in a mother's face and saying, "How do you feel?" I mean, sometimes it's just insensitive.

B2) If any of the following situations apply, reporters/editors should be permitted to exclude RPs:

a) The story is about a situation in which the direct effects on RPs are absent or unclear: As Anthony noted:

> Some decisions don't directly affect real people. And in some instances it's hard to even draw that connection -- between the decision that's made and how it's gonna affect real people.

He also cited the example of a court trial:

> The only people that are gonna be affected by a court trial are the prosecutors, the defense attorneys, the defendant, the victim. Or the victim's family. And the system as a whole. In that situation, your average citizen out there is not gonna be directly affected. The only effect you could see from their standpoint is, I would say, getting one more criminal off the street.

b) Deadlines do not allow time to find RPs: Bob gave the example of a story about the state legislature's actions on a bill about concealed weapons:

> There are no RPs in that story -- though there clearly are RPs involved in the issue. The reason for that is the intensely practical one that the reporter was engaged all day and into the evening in listening to and trying to figure out what the state Senate was doing.

c) The reporter or editor's ability or capacity makes it impossible to find an RP in the situation: Ellen noted that reporter inexperience means that a story that needs to run immediately because of its timeliness may have to go without an RP. In addition, she said, she may have trouble thinking of where to find an RP herself.

Both rules (b) and (c), more generally, represent pragmatic considerations that reflect the less-than-ideal reality in which the editors must live.

In addition to these rules, it also appears that RPs may be excluded or their number limited because of space limitations. Anthony, talking about a story on deaths in domestic violence cases, said the two RPs in the story -- the mother of a woman who claimed she killed a man in self-defense and a woman who was abused -- were enough, partly because of space constraints, in a story in which the comments of police, the county prosecutor, and others are relevant.

If a story does have RPs, another rule highlights the way editors generally view the story: C. If a story has RPs, editors should, if necessary, use this to argue for the quality or importance of the story. This rule emerged directly and indirectly from both observations and interviews. At a budget meeting, during discussion of a story about an area hit by drive-by shootings, Lois noted that the reporter had "a couple of RPs in the story." Anthony noted the presence of an RP the next day in talking about another police story. Another day, one of the news editors, Doris, after commenting that she thought a story was dull, noted in its favor that it did have real people.

Mary, asked in her interview what she thought a "good story" was, said one reason was "it's a good read -- it's written well, it's got real people, which is a basic for good reporting." Her comment suggests that presence of RPs is a ground for arguing the story is stronger.

The editors' behavior through this rule is in line with the current industry emphasis on reconnecting with readers -- though the interviews show that it did not begin with that trend and that at least some of the editors see it more as simply "good journalism."

Are some RPs better than others? The data suggest that editors at the Gazette see it that way:

D1. Reporters and editors should choose RPs who are representative of the problem/issue/situation in the story. Lois points to this rule:

> And we call it RPs or real people, but I've been doing that since I started reporting like 17 years ago -- trying to find the person that epitomizes or illustrates what it is we're talking about here.

Effectively representing a situation probably means being close to it. In trying to clarify what a good RP is, I had the following exchange with Anthony:

> Q: So a good RP would also be somebody who's articulate, is that --
>
> A: Well not necessarily articulate. It's more or less how, I guess you say, how close to a situation are they? That would be a deciding factor. Like, I would never take the mother out in that situation [the story about domestic violence].

As Jack noted, however, one person will not always be enough:

> One person can't really be representative, but you talk to five or six and you get a lot better story -- and a more balanced view of whatever you're trying to report about.

Still, the thrust of the editors' comments indicated that it is desirable to find even one person who embodies a larger situation.

The editors also appear interested in avoiding stereotypes that unrepresentative RPs may perpetuate. In a budget meeting, Mary, mentioning a story about welfare, said -- to the managing editor's apparent displeasure -- "The two RPs in here are both males, both on welfare, and both mentally ill." In her interview, Lois referred to an earlier story about welfare recipients in which a photo of a black welfare recipient was run inconspicuously rather than used prominently to represent recipients who, the story noted, included graduate students at the local university.

D2. Reporters and editors should choose RPs who are knowledgeable about the situation in the story. Ellen said the definition of a good RP includes knowledge. More specifically, Bob noted that "not every real person has anything to say. Not every real person has actually thought about a given issue." He also said:

> If you're talking about a national issue, let's say, then there's a tendency to go out and do the old-fashioned man-on-the-street survey. Well, the man on the street or the woman on the street or the kid on the street may or may not really be very well-informed or very thoughtful and so, it can be a situation where your effort to get RPs may not really add very much to the sum of human knowledge.

D3. Reporters/editors should choose RPs who connect with readers or engage their emotions. Lois, who in a follow-up conversation said a good RP is someone who "emotes," pointed to this rule in another comment in her interview:

> We have to keep reinforcing, reinforcing, reinforcing, "Where's the RP? Where's the real person? Where is the individual whose life reflects what it is we're talking about here?" because that human element is what connects the readers to the issue: "This could be me, this could be happening to me, this was me."

This concern for resonating emotionally with readers mirrors the industry trend toward connecting with readers -- but Lois made it clear that she considers this kind of connection, though emphasized strongly now, to be part of good journalism.

RPs As Audience

The broad rule from this vantage point also parallels interest in the industry: 2. If a story is being written and edited by Gazette reporters/editors, they should include elements of interest to RPs. Evidence from both observations and interviews supports this rule. For example, during a budget meeting discussion of a story about double-parked delivery trucks downtown, Mary argued for the importance of the story by saying that people have to wait to go around them and that the problem is a hot topic of discussion on a local talk-radio station. Its perceived interest to RPs, then, helped justify its importance in her argument.

In general terms in her interview, Mary said:

> The most important thing to me is what are people interested in -- not what are we interested in giving them, but what are people interested in reading?

As examples of topics of interest to the Gazette's community, she and others cited medical news because of a large health care community, education because of the university and other schools, and local government -- presumably because of its obvious impact on the community.

Under this broad rule fall more specific ones:

A. Reporters/editors should show the impact of events or actions on RPs. Lois said in her interview that a good story shows this kind of impact:

> When I think about a good story, I think about the human element, that something that actually could affect us all is affecting this particular one person; we're getting an opportunity for him or her to say how it's affecting them. We're able to articulate well how this is going to affect a particular segment of our community.

In his interview, Anthony talked at length about the need for journalists to cover the criminal justice system in a way that shows how the decisions of police and policy-makers affect real people. As an example of how the Gazette has tried to gear coverage this way, he cited a story about how local police are handling the war on drugs in the city. The story, he said, attempted to show that police are focusing on one drug, crack, and on the users, not the sources, of that drug. As the editor of the story, he hoped to explain in simple terms "the way the system works, and the repercussions of, the outcomes of what happens when you attack a drug problem in this way" -- outcomes that include increased prison overcrowding and possible discrimination against blacks in drug enforcement (because crack is concentrated in predominantly black neighborhoods of the city).

B. If possible, reporters/editors should try to help RPs through their coverage. More specifically this means:

B1. Try to empower people for involvement or dialogue in the community. In one budget meeting, Bob had said a story about a school board public forum would run in Thursday's paper, after the event, when Ellen asked why it couldn't go Wednesday, before the event, so people could clear their calendars for it and "pack the house." Ellen pushes most often for such efforts to help readers get involved; another day she urged that state representatives' phone numbers run with a story about legislative bills. Her desire to run "empowerment" information with stories points to a goal that Bob himself expressed in an interview:

> If the goal of the newspaper is to engage in conversation with its community, and I think it is, and if the goal of the newspaper is therefore to write about problems and issues and controversies in ways that are relevant and useful to members of the community, then it seems to me to make sense to try whenever we can to get . . . those people, the real people in the stories so that their voices can be heard, so that their viewpoints can be reflected, and so that we can provide them a voice, so we can provide the community a way to talk to its elected officials, instead of the one-way conversation that is most common in journalism, which is the public officials and other power-holders talking to the rest of us through images on the television screen or words on the pages of the newspaper, without the audience having any very good way to respond or participate in that collective conversation.

Information to enable reader involvement is one way that the Gazette is trying to help readers enter this conversation.

This element of the Gazette's rules on RPs points clearly to the public journalism movement, of which the newspaper has been a part. It also points to the views of Yankelovich, who argues that the media "hold the key to strengthening the public."[31] Yankelovich, whose views have influenced discussion of public journalism, believes that the media in their conventional role short-circuit the development of settled public opinion by raising people's consciousness but then failing to help them wrestle with the issues on which they report. Rather than simply raising public awareness of problems, he argues, the media can help the public work through issues to solutions.[32] The Gazette editors are moving toward this goal by trying to empower readers to communicate their concerns to leaders.

B2. Try to help people in their daily lives. This related rule expresses a desire among Gazette editors to help people navigate their own lives, whether they get involved in addressing community problems or not. As editors discussed plans for coverage after a survey showed crime was the number-one concern of residents as a city council election neared, Ellen said she wanted to see information about what RPs should do to stay safe. Another day, she asked whether "reader service" information should accompany a story about flu shots, telling people whom to call. Mary, in her interview, said that for at least three years she had been doing information boxes that readers can clip and save on topics such as what to remember about poison ivy or how to winterize your car. "Reader service" information about flu shots or clip-and-save items about poison ivy are right in line with reader-connection efforts at many newspapers.

A final rule related to efforts to be interesting to RPs is: C. If reporters or editors are doing election coverage, they should include topics that interest or benefit RPs. Jack framed possible approaches to campaign coverage two ways:

> There's two ways you can define the campaign: you can have the candidates define the campaign or you can have the people define the campaign. The best way is to have sort of a mix of the two, and too often it's been just the candidates talking about what the candidates wanted to talk about and not enough focus on what are the real issues, and those may or may not be the real issues in the campaign. And I think there's a lot of support for trying to get the real issues out and discussed, and I think it's very important that we do that in election campaigns.

Bob pointed to an approach the Gazette is taking that emphasizes the issues that "real people" consider "real":

> I think an awfully good example of how our approach to RPs has affected our coverage is in our election coverage that's going on right now. We chose to begin our campaign coverage not by asking the candidates and the official community leaders what ought to be done, but by doing a scientific survey to try to find out from the RPs, the community at large, what the issues are in the eyes of the people who are gonna be ((voters)) or at least the constituents. And the value of that, I think, is shown by the fact that we were sort of surprised by the outcome. That is the candidates, I think, and most of the community officials and most journalists would have said beforehand that the most important issue facing this community is growth and development. The RPs don't see it that way. Overwhelmingly they said the most important issue is crime. That sort of bottom-up reporting, I think, has changed the nature not only of our campaign coverage, but to some extent has changed the nature of the campaign.

Thus, the Gazette's election coverage, through polling aimed at the views of RPs, has sought to focus both the coverage and the campaign on topics that interest them. This effort reflects the paper's interest in public journalism, which again links the practice of the Gazette editors to larger trends in the industry.

Conclusions

No evidence surfaced in any observations or interviews to disconfirm the prevalence of the idea of RPs among editors at the Gazette. I did not explore how fully the RP idea has trickled down to the reporters themselves, but the evidence seems clear that the editors are aware of the "real person" and carry their notion of him or her into their planning and decisions about both the subjects and sources, and the audience, of news stories.

The idea of talking about living, breathing "real" people with a two-letter acronym initially seemed cold; it seemed to turn people into a commodity. I came to see that editors' concern with giving voice to, speaking to, and even helping RPs was genuine. Still, stated in terms of the larger trends in the media, the idea carries both commercial and human elements. In the news media environment of the 1990s, newspaper managers must consider real people a commodity to be reached in order to survive. In this sense, the Gazette editors' talk of real people is notable in that it parallels the broader concern in the newspaper industry about how to reconnect with a lost audience.

At the same time, the editors' concern for engaging real people in public life mirrors the broader discussions in the profession about "public journalism." This movement, while it undoubtedly has commercial motivations for some, reflects a longstanding concern of many in journalism about how public needs can be served through the media.

Thus, although editors did not themselves always link their activity to industry trends, this study opens a window on how these two key trends may be playing out as editors at one newspaper communicate with each other and with the "real" world.

The illumination of rules for this communication through Shimanoff's rules theory also suggests that the window could be opened at other newspapers to understand how they view "real people" or how they discuss other aspects of news judgment. By studying editors' or reporters' talk about stories, sources, and audience, researchers could increase understanding of the criteria journalists use in daily practice.

NOTES

[1] For example, although newspaper advertising revenue nationally increased during 1994, circulation was expected to be down slightly for both 1994 and '95. George Garneau, "1994 Ends on High Note," *Editor & Publisher*, 7 January 1995, 15. And 20 of the 25 largest U.S. newspapers showed drops in circulation in the six months that ended Sept. 30, 1994, compared with the same period the previous year. Mark Fitzgerald, "Circulation Slide Continues," *Editor & Publisher*, 12 November 1994, 9.

[2] Jean Gaddy Wilson and David Craig, "On Our Minds -- This Month: Stemming Readership Declines," *Presstime*, July-August 1994, 70-71.

[3] David Noack, "Getting Readers Involved: Newspapers Take Steps to Retain Readership," *Editor & Publisher*, 23 April 1994, 22.

[4] Ibid.; Janni Benson, "Three New Ventures," *Quill*, September 1992, 16; Doug Underwood, "The Very Model of the Reader-Driven Newsroom?" *Columbia Journalism Review*, November 1993, 42.

[5] Jay Rosen of New York University employs the term "public journalism." The Pew Center for Civic Journalism, in addition to the AEJMC Civic Journalism Interest Group, has used the term "civic journalism."

[6] Jay Rosen and Davis Merritt, Jr., *Public Journalism: Theory and Practice* (Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Foundation, 1994); Alicia C. Shepard, "The Gospel of Public Journalism," *American Journalism Review*, September 1994, 28-35.

[7] Civic journalism projects are being studied and summarized by the Project on Public Life and the Press, based at New York University. See "Public Journalism: A Progress Report," compiled by Lisa Austin, August 1994, which lists 42 initiatives at 36 newspapers. In a telephone interview July 24, 1994, Austin said that the project was aware of efforts at 171 news organizations, including broadcast outlets, and that the number was growing rapidly.

[8] Susan B. Shimanoff, *Communication Rules: Theory and Research* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 1980).

[9] Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

[10] Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Story in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978); "Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected," *American Journal of Sociology* 79,

no. 1 (1973): 110-31.

[11] Hansen et al. point to eight "classic" studies of newsmaking in addition to those by Tuchman and Gans, in Kathleen A. Hansen, Jean Ward, Joan L. Conners, and Mark Neuzil, "Local Breaking News: Sources, Technology, and News Routines," Journalism Quarterly 71, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 561-72.

[12] Among the most recent source studies are Hansen et al.; and Stephen D. Reese, August Grant, and Lucig H. Danielian, "The Structure of News Sources on Television: a Network Analysis of 'CBS News,' 'Nightline,' 'MacNeil/Lehrer,' and 'This Week with David Brinkley,'" Journal of Communication 44, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 84. Hansen et al. cite 12 additional studies on sources in their article.

[13] Daniel Yankelovich, Coming to Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

[14] William Greider, Who Will Tell the People? The Betrayal of American Democracy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

[15] Gans' sociological study uses the term "considerations," a broader and less formal term than Shimanoff's "rules," which are described in more detail in my discussion of the editors' rules.

[16] Participants in the study were told they and the paper would not be identified. This commitment was aimed at increasing their openness. I gained easy access to the meetings based on a previous relationship with the managing editor and his openness to having an academic observer sit in. I obtained advance permission from the managing editor and formal consent at the first meetings from all of the editors who regularly attended.

[17] The four city editors were interviewed because they directly shape the content of reporters' stories and help to decide where those stories are placed. The managing editor was interviewed because of his knowledge of the Gazette's priorities and his decision-making role. The news editor was interviewed because of his familiarity with the priorities and his opportunities to observe decision-making on local stories.

[18] Although this research was not an extended ethnographic study, the approach of beginning with a general research question and narrowing it based on observation represented an attempt to follow the strategy used in ethnographic studies of adjusting and focusing the researcher's questions based on what he or she observes on the scene. This approach is described in, among other places, Thomas R. Lindlof, Qualitative Communication Research Methods (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995).

[19] Lindlof, 240-41. Negative cases are used to revise findings in

ethnographic studies based on data that appear to conflict with initial understandings. Member checks involve confirming the accuracy of the researcher's perceptions with the subjects of the study.

[20] I am discussing central characteristics of an RP in terms of definition, not rules, because it is easier to think of these as qualities than as rules for editor or reporter behavior. The discussion of rules will look at how reporters and editors are to act with this definition in mind.

[21] Yankelovich, 2.

[22] Greider.

[23] Ibid., 57.

[24] Ibid., 77-78.

[25] Ibid., 90.

[26] Ibid., 91.

[27] Ibid., 103.

[28] There appears to be no conceptual difference between RPs in these categories; I will apply the same definition above to both, distinguishing the two based on the direction of the editors' thought and action in different situations.

[29] By subjects, I mean people referred to in stories but not interviewed; by sources, I mean people who are interviewed.

[30] Hansen et al., 566.

[31] Yankelovich, 250.

[32] Ibid., 251. Early interest in Yankelovich in connection with public journalism is discussed in Edmund B. Lambeth, "The News Media and Democracy," Media Studies Journal, Fall 1992, 161-75.

Comparing Questionnaire Formats in Accuracy Studies

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For presentation during the Newspaper Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference in Washington, D.C., August 9-12, 1995.

ABSTRACT

Comparing Questionnaire Formats in Accuracy Studies

A survey of sources quoted in articles written in two journalism courses was conducted to determine how questionnaire format affected response rate and number of errors identified. Based on the results of the study, the length and format of the accuracy survey do not make a difference in terms of the response rate. The accuracy questionnaire should include specific items on basic facts, general facts, direct quotes, paraphrases, omissions, and unnecessary information.

Comparing Questionnaire Formats in Accuracy Studies

INTRODUCTION

In his pioneering study of newspaper accuracy, Charnley (1936) established the tradition of using the assessments by sources quoted in news stories as the basic "truth standard" for measuring the story's accuracy. Critiquing 50 years of accuracy studies stemming from that original effort, Meyer (1988) noted that, far from achieving Charnley's goal of identifying ways to avoid errors, accuracy studies have not yet even developed standard measures that are "unambiguous, uncontroversial and replicable -- in short, reliable."

Even at the basic level of an inventory of error frequency, Charnley's plea for a reliable body of data on the accuracy of reporting is simply not available. Singletary's (1980) review of mostly academic studies indicated that about half of straight news stories contain some error -- fact errors, typos, mechanical errors and source-defined inadequacies. Meyer reported that accuracy studies conducted by newspapers themselves show errors rates of 10 to 20 percent. He cited Cranberg's (1987) study as evidence that sources may be more critical of the stories when an outside academic asks them to react than when the newspaper itself does. Work based on student reporting, generally unpublished class assignments, also shows wide variability in error estimates, ranging from 83 percent (Ryan, 1975) to about 30 percent (Patton and Weber, 1978; Weston, 1981).

Comparing error rates is complicated by the fact that the studies use varied formats and numbers of questions for their surveys. While student work may not be an ideal indicator of errors in actual newspaper work, such stories do provide an opportunity to introduce some methodology controls that might be inappropriate or intrusive in professional journalism. These include control over the assignments and conditions of the reporting, as well as controlled experimentation with the format and conditions of the surveys themselves.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most accuracy studies follow Charnley's original procedure of sending a copy of the story and a questionnaire to sources named in news stories. Charnley limited his study to simple straight news (announcements, short meeting and advances, accident and police) and longer straight news that was distinctly factual -- drives and campaigns, business meetings, community celebrations, speech stories and news interviews. Excluded were sports, color, multi-sourced stories, human interest, editorial or commentary.

The Charnley questionnaire format had a check space for an entirely accurate story. The two-page form then listed errors in three classifications: mechanical or typographical errors; writer's errors, with separate subheads for mistakes in names, titles, ages, addresses, places, times, dates, quotations, figures, grammar and spelling; and errors in meaning, defined by these instructions: "If the story errs in implication -- in the impression it gives the reader, in emphasizing any point unduly or in failing to give any points due emphasis, in omitting information or details necessary to give the reader a fair understanding of its subject -- please describe such errors below."

Later studies refined the list of objective errors and developed more closed-ended or forced-choice type questions for the more subjective error categories.

Brown's (1965) survey of 42 Oklahoma weeklies did not include Charnley's "addresses wrong" or "mechanical errors." Brown added items for inaccurate headlines, misuse of technical words, stories not fairly and objectively written and distorting omissions. Berry's (1967) study of three San Francisco papers included specific categories for overemphasis and underemphasis. Cote (1970) compared 59 straight news stories ("essentially factual as opposed to the interpretative or 'think' piece") that were carried both by UP and UPI afternoon A wires. He coded specific errors as representing either "reporting" or "interpretation."

While most studies take as a given that the source's perspective is correct, a few attempt some kind of validation, especially of subjective errors. Lawrence and Grey (1969) recruited 19 respondents (from 82 surveys) who had identified errors in meaning, omission or emphasis. They conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with both those respondents and the reporters involved to clarify points of disagreement in subjective interpretation. The importance of that objective/subjective distinction was underscored by Tillinghast (1982), who asked reporters to respond to the source's criticisms. Reporters accepted about half of the factual errors as being valid, but agreed with only 5 percent of the interpretation errors. For his study, Myer brought in two mediators (an assistant managing editor and a market researcher) to referee instances of disagreement between reporter and source. The two agreed in 84 percent of the disputes, with about half of the judgments favoring reporter and half favoring the source.

Accuracy surveys of student work typically do not mention any student rebuttal of source criticism. Like the surveys used for newspaper studies, the formats range from short and open-ended to lengthy and detailed. Patten and Weber (1978) used a one-page questionnaire asked three questions: 1. "Is the story accurate? If not, please specify the inaccuracies." 2. "Was the student professional in his/her approach to you as a news source? If not, please specify." 3. "Please make any other comment you care to regarding the story or the student's approach." Sources reported 74 percent accuracy rates, with most errors termed "minor: quibbles over the exact phrasing of direct quotes."

Ryan (1975) had a check list of 17 specific kinds of errors. (In order of frequency of occurrence, they were misquotes, omissions, lack of explanation, story too short, underemphasis, overemphasis, name, quote out of context, source id, other id, time, name of organization wrong, irrelevant info included, figures, story too long, dates, organization name misspelled.

Perhaps because of the varying formats, the accuracy studies have produced surprisingly few consistent findings. Charnley found a clear trend in terms of where the story originated -- with the reporter, an original source, a publicity agent or a prepared statement. Those originating from outside sources contained about half the errors as reporter-originated stories, a trend confirmed by Tichenor et al's (1970) study of science reporting, as well as by Scanlon's (1978) study. In fact, Scanlon concluded that the "fastest route to an error is to allow a reporter to get involved -- by an interview or dialogue of any sort."

Again, while differences in formats and coding categories make comparisons difficult, the accuracy studies generally show a higher incidence between studies of subjective errors than objectives ones. Complaints about omissions and emphasis commonly top the list of subjective errors, while problems with quotes are high on the list of objective errors. That objective/subjective pattern is not consistent. Meyer, for example, found sources identifying more objective errors when the survey came from a newspaper, but more subjective errors when it came from an academic.

HYPOTHESES

Perhaps the major choices faced by accuracy researchers involve how many questions to ask and how to phrase them. Essentially, most of the studies have involved variants of two basic choices: open-ended questions that run the risk of not picking up specific errors of interest and error checklists that may cue respondents to some kinds of errors and lead them away from thinking of others. This study attempted to compare those two choices. The study also manipulated the source of the survey, in this case whether it came from a "researcher" or from a course instructor. The assumption was that the "researcher" was more like an outside academic and "instructor" was more like a newspaper itself doing the survey. These general hypotheses guided decisions about format and analysis:

1. Response rates will be greater for shorter questionnaires and for checklist formats.

2. More errors will be identified in longer questionnaires and in more open-ended formats.

3. More errors will be identified in surveys coming from the researcher than from the instructor.

METHODOLOGY

Stories used in this study were those turned in during the second week of November 1994 by students in two different courses -- an introductory media writing course and a reporting class. The introductory course focuses on basic writing for journalism, advertising and public relations and is taken primarily by sophomore students who plan to major in those areas. Stories used in this survey from the introductory writing class dealt with environmental topics and were the students' major out-of-class assignment of the term. The reporting course has the introductory course as a prerequisite and includes substantial instruction on reporting techniques. Most of the students in that course are junior journalism or public relations majors. The reporting class stories were regular weekly assignments that typically cover campus and community events. Stories from both courses were 3-5 pages in length.

Unlike many studies sent only to the primary source, all sources named in the stories were mailed a cover letter, a questionnaire and a copy of the story, using addresses supplied by the student reporters. Not counting duplicates and undeliverables, the mailings went to 395 sources named in 103 writing class stories and 80 reporting class stories.

Two forms of the cover letter were used. One came on a "Communication Research Center" letterhead from one of two "researchers" identified with a research project. The other came from either one or the other of the actual course instructors.

Four different questionnaire forms were used, varying length and question format. A "long-checklist" version had 20 items; a "short-checklist" had six. A "long-open-ended" version had seven items; a "short-open-ended" had two. Mailings were rotated through all sources for all stories. (Copies of the questionnaires are appended.)

Packets were mailed the week after Thanksgiving. A self-addressed envelope was included, but no return postage was attached. No follow-up mailings were done.

RESULTS

Response Rate: Of the 395 deliverable questionnaires, 190 were returned for an overall response rate of 48 percent. Although differences were not statistically significant, response rates for the two closed formats had a somewhat higher return rate than the two open-ended formats, 51 percent compared to 45 percent (see Table 1).

Length made even less difference in terms of response rate. The two short formats showed a combined return rate of 49 percent, compared to 47 percent for the longer versions. That pattern was not consistent across conditions. Return rate for the short form open-ended was four percentage points higher than for the longer version, but return rate for the 20-item closed format was two percentage points higher than the 6-item version (see Table 1).

We did not have a clear expectation regarding the researcher/instructor manipulation, since the hypothesis had to do with error incidence, rather than return rate. Still, return rate for "researcher" was higher than for "instructor," 50 percent compared to 46 percent.

We also had no expectations for the difference in return rate from the sources of articles based on which class the article was written for, the introductory class or the reporting class. Still, the return rate for the beginning writing class was substantially higher than for the reporting class, 54 percent compared to 40 percent. That may reflect the nature of the stories and sources. The writing class stories all dealt with environmental topics, and so the sources were typically people involved with environmental organizations or agencies. The reporting stories included a wide range of topics.

Those differences in the types of sources appearing in the two sets of stories did seem to influence response rate. Sources were identified as being one of these six types:

1. Representatives of public agencies, including local and state government and university centers,

2. Representatives of private, non-profit organizations,

3. Representatives of private, profit organizations, including businesses and hospitals,

4. Faculty who were representing their academic expertise,

5. Students who were not otherwise identified as representing a non-campus organization,

6. A "miscellaneous other."

For four of the six groups, response rates were about the same as the overall rate (see Table 2). One group was over-represented and one under-represented. Sources from public agencies comprised 23 percent of the mailings and 38 percent of the returns. Students accounted for 27 percent of the mailings but only 14 percent of the returns.

Error Incidence: Taking the broadest definition of error -- whether the source raised ANY objection in response to any of the questions -- only 30 percent of the sources had no complaints.

As expected, the two longer versions of the questionnaire uncovered the highest percentage of sources noting at least one problem -- 77 percent compared to 63 percent for the two shorter versions. By a lesser margin, the two open-ended formats prompted a greater incidence of error (73 percent) than the closed formats (68 percent). The general direction of the hypothesis is supported -- that the more opportunities the formats give sources to identify errors, the more errors they will indeed identify.

In general, sources identified more objective errors than subjective ones (see Table 3). Among the 190 responses, if only one type of error was noted, it was about twice as likely to be objective (25 percent) as subjective (13 percent).

The association between the format of the questionnaire and the kind of errors identified is statistically significant (Chi Square=41.11, 9 df, p<.001). Inspecting the cells indicates that the long-open-ended format produces a different pattern of results than the other versions -- more subjective errors than "chance" frequency and fewer objective errors. The short-open format shows just the opposite pattern, greater-than-chance objective errors and fewer subjective ones.

Types of Errors: This comparison involved somewhat different procedures for each of the four forms. For the 20-item-closed, instructions told respondents to mark X for a problem and O for an item that was OK. The six short-closed items were phrased at yes/no. For the open-ended items, if a respondent noted any kind of problem in response to a question, that item was coded as "inaccurate."

The four formats led respondents to identify very different rank orders of broad error types. Complaints about direct quotes and paraphrases topped the list of errors identified by both the closed formats, followed by errors of omission and basic facts. For the long-open, the most frequent complaint category involved things not included in the story that the respondent felt should have been there. Problems with quotes were second, and problems with basic facts a close third. "Basic facts" was the most commonly noted problem in the short-open format, followed closely by perceived errors with quotes. In all four formats, problems with "fairness" was the bottom category.

Source comments offered to clarify errors in direct quotations often suggested the sources were tentative about their criticisms. One source reported as an error a quotation attributed to him using the term "these people" in a story about the homeless, but he noted he was interviewed for 10 stories on the same subject, so he couldn't remember. Another respondent, despite a long-closed format form, offered 250 words of criticism on a 550-word story, then added, "Of course, at age 84, my memory is not the best in the world." Still another added a 90-word note to a long-closed form. In it he objected to a quote using the phrase "raised hell," saying he didn't remember using the term and may have gone "off the record."

Several comments regarding what the respondents considered to be omissions and errors in basic facts cited the reporter's lack of background in the issue. One respondent wrote, "Overall, the story points out the weakness of many news stories: the reporter has no background in the subject area being covered." Another respondent, also stressing the reporter's lack of preparation, declined to use the short-open form, and attached a letter of 725 words covering eight separate errors. He concluded, "I think this article is quite typical (unfortunately) of the types of myths that hamper scientists' efforts to educate the public."

Complicating interpretation of responses about quotation and omission, a respondent reported a misquotation, suggested considerable information was omitted, then added, "Of course I have no idea whether I mentioned any of these things." Still another source offered numerous criticisms of emphasis and omission, then noted: "We just cannot appreciate the truncated journalistic style that lacks flair and profundity."

The checklist format posed a particular problem if respondents did not follow through with specifics. For example, the most frequently checked basic fact item on the closed-long format concerned problems with "numbers, figures, statistics, other data." Only five of the eight respondents who checked it offered explanations.

The two closed formats showed about equal splits between errors identified in direct quotes and paraphrases, perhaps because both of those were asked about specifically. In the open-ended formats, respondents seldom distinguished between quotes and paraphrased material.

The high incidence of the "omissions" category for the long-open format can be attributed to questionnaire construction. Unlike other formats, no item asked directly about omissions. However, three of the seven questions asked respondents to identify other topics, sources and viewpoints that should have been included. They had no difficulty suggesting possibilities.

Comparisons from multiple sources: Unlike most accuracy studies, this one queried all sources mentioned in a story, rather than just the primary source. That allowed us to try to compare different sources and different formats reacting to the same story. In all, we had 40 stories with more than one response. Seven stories had more than two sources returning questionnaires. In all, 62 format-by-format comparisons were possible.

Since the forms had differently phrased questions, the analysis procedure was somewhat imprecise. We treated objective and subjective items separately. We coded a "match" if the same kinds of items in two versions were either accurate or inaccurate. We coded a "mismatch" if even one item was discrepant, for instance the story was said to be accurate in the 2-question short/open form but inaccurate on any of the 10 objective errors listed on the long/closed form.

We found agreement in only about half of the comparisons. More precisely, there were 32 matches and 30 mismatches for objective items, and 34 matches and 28 mismatches for subjective ones. In general, discrepancies did not seem to be attributable to formats; rather, they reflected differences in what the sources themselves knew about the story, especially their part of it.

CONCLUSIONS

No reliable body of data about reporters' accuracy in the stories they write will exist until a standard approach is developed to survey story sources.

Based on the results of this study, the length and the format of the accuracy survey do not make a difference in terms of the response rate. Based on the response rate and the amount of and kind of information provided by the respondents, a brief and focused open-ended form is recommended.

The specific items we recommend be included are these:

1. Basic facts - for example, names, titles, dates, statistics.

2. General facts - conclusions, explanations, descriptions.

3. Direct Quotes - verbatim, properly attributed, in the correct context.

4. Paraphrases - adequate summary, both in meaning and context.

5. Omissions - information essential to the story not included.

6. Unnecessary information - exaggerations, irrelevancies.

Checklists or item inventories do standardize coding and analysis. However, our results show that the open-ended formats identify the same kinds of specific errors. Moreover, the open-ended items avoid two problems we found in dealing with the checklists. One was respondents who checked an item as being inaccurate but failed to offer details or specifics. In those instances, neither the reporter (nor a mediator) has any easy way of assessing the validity of the criticism. Also, we found some instances of sources who checked an item as being correct, but elsewhere in their comments indicated a problem, for example that their name was misspelled.

Mailing to multiple sources in the same story also introduces another set of validity problems beyond those associated with questionnaire format. Sources bring their own biases to the story. In some instances, they indicated factual inaccuracies in the story when, in fact, the information they said was incorrect was deemed accurate by another source. Typically, this was the case in stories with competing points of view, when respondents disagreed with information provided by the opposing source. Future accuracy studies might experiment with single-source vs. multiple-source assessments. The general finding that source-originated stories like press releases are more reliable may be reflecting source bias rather than accuracy. An interesting variant at some point might be to have neutral third parties react to stories, rather than the sources involved.

Some sources apparently thought they were providing a pre-publication review and "corrected" the article, including making corrections in grammar. In some instances, they corrected what already was correct AP style. In a further study, half of the stories could be typeset to see if the source found fewer errors in an article ready for publication than in a typed article that had not been finalized.

In this study, the survey forms were mailed to sources during the twelfth week of the semester. The majority of the surveys were returned before the end of the semester. However, none of the students saw the responses of their sources. The instructors involved in this study agreed that the students would greatly benefit from seeing the sources' responses.

First, by seeing the sources' responses, students would realize how important their stories were to those sources. Students often consider a story to be just another assignment. The response of the sources -- often several pages of comments or a line-editing of the story -- would reinforce that every story is important to the people involved in it.

Second, if students know that a story may be sent to the sources, the students may be more conscientious in their reporting and writing. Unfortunately, some students may make up quotes or facts to save the time needed for reporting or to make a more interesting story. Knowing that their stories will be sent to the sources gives the students the real-world situation reporters face in knowing that the people they are writing about will, in fact, read what they write.

Third, the students would be made aware of errors in the story from the sources' point of view. Especially in the case of the articles on environmental topics, the instructor did not have the background on the topic to identify every factual error. The students who received feedback from the source would see the errors as identified by experts in the field.

Finally, the students would receive positive feedback on their stories. Many of the sources praised the students for their good reporting and for addressing the topic in the first place. This kind of feedback helps motivate students and helps them see the impact their writing can have.

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TABLE ONE: RESPONSE RATES BY CONDITIONS

	Mailed	Returned	Response Rate
Questionnaire format			
Long-closed	96	45	52%
Short-closed	100	43	50%
Short-open	105	53	47%
Long-open	94	49	43%
Survey Sponsor			
Researcher	202	102	50%
Instructor	193	88	46%
Course			
News writing	225	122	54%
News reporting	170	68	40%

TABLE TWO: ERROR RATE BY FORMAT

	Responses	Error	Error Rate
Questionnaire format			
Long-open	45	36	84%
Long-closed	49	35	71%
Short-closed	53	34	64%
Short-open	45	28	62%

TABLE THREE: FORMAT BY TYPE OF ERROR

	No Errors		Objective Errors		Subjective Errors		Both Types of Errors	
Format	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Short-open	17	30%	17	35%	0	0%	11	18%
Long-open	7	13%	3	6%	14	56%	19	31%
Short-closed	19	34%	16	33%	8	32%	10	16%
Long-closed	13	23%	12	25%	3	12%	21	34%
Total N*	56		48		25		61	

* %s may not sum to 100 because of rounding error

APPENDIX A

COPIES OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Story #:

Please answer the following questions about the enclosed story. If an item does not apply to this particular story, either leave it blank or write "NA" for "not applicable."

1. Was the story accurate? If not, please specify the inaccuracies.

2. Was the story fair and balanced? If not, please specify what was wrong with it.

Please use the space below (or the reverse side) if you wish to comment on any errors or to make any other comments about either the story or the reporter's professionalism and competence.

Story #:

Please answer the following questions about the enclosed story. If an item does not apply to this particular story, either leave it blank or write "NA" for "not applicable."

1. What names, titles, ages, addresses or other identifying information were stated incorrectly, or were they all correct?

2. How accurately were the facts and opinions attributed to you reported?

3. How accurately do you believe the facts and opinons attributed to others were reported?

4. What about the emphasis of the story? Did it get the main point? Were there serious exaggerations or major points underemphasized?

5. What other sources, if any, should have been represented

6. What other points of view, if any, should have been represented in the story?

7. What other topics or information, if any, should have been included in the story?

Please use the reverse side if you wish to comment on any errors or to make any other comments about either the story or the reporter's professionalism and competence.

Story #:

Please answer these few questions about the enclosed story. (For "NO," answers, you may use either the margins or the back of this form to specify the nature of the error).

1. BASIC FACTS: Are the names, titles, dates, places and other facts in the story correct?

YES ___
NO ___
Not Applicable: ___

2. FAIRNESS: Was the story fair and balanced in overall tone?

YES ___
NO ___
Not Applicable: ___

3. DIRECT QUOTES: Are all direct quotes presented verbatim?

YES ___
NO ___
Not Applicable: ___

4. PARAPHRASES: If statements are summarized rather than directly quoted, is the paraphrase accurate?

YES ___
NO ___
Not Applicable: ___

5. OMISSIONS: Were there important or significant points that were not included in the story

YES ___
NO ___
Not Applicable: ___

6. EMPHASIS: Were there points in the story that were overemphasized or exaggerated?

YES ___
NO ___
Not Applicable: ___

Please use the reverse side if you wish to comment on any errors or to make any other comments about either the story or the reporter's professionalism and competence.

Story #:

For all of these aspects that apply to this story, circle the "X" by those items that contained an error. If a particular item was OK or does not apply, circle the "0". Either in the margin or on the reverse side, you may specify what the error(s) was.

Circle X, if inaccurate
Circle 0, if OK or not applicable

1. Names of people wrong or misspelled: X 0

2. Other names wrong (organizations, places, etc): X 0

3. Dates or times: X 0

4. Titles: X 0

5. Other Background info (ages, etc.): X 0

6. Addresses: X 0

7. Numbers, figures, statistics, other data: X 0

8. Direct quotes wrong (or quotes not verbatim): X 0

9. Statements paraphrased inaccurately: X 0

10. Statements taken out of context: X 0

11. Qualifications or explanations omitted: X 0

12. Important information underemphasized: X 0

13. Relevant information omitted: X 0

14. Unimportant information overemphasized: X 0

15. Story too short: X 0

16. Irrelevant information included: X 0

17. Story longer than necessary: X 0

18. All points of view not represented: X 0

19. Contained reporter's personal opinion: X 0

20. One side or point of view overrepresented: X 0

Please use the reverse side if you wish to comment on any errors or to make any other comments about either the story or the reporter's professionalism and competence.

SEGMENTING THE ELECTORATE BY MEDIA USE TYPES: THE VALUE OF NEWSPAPERS IN LOCAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

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Paper presented to the Newspaper Division
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August 1995

The authors acknowledge and thank the University of South Alabama Research Council for the funding grant which made this research possible.

SEGMENTING THE ELECTORATE BY MEDIA USE TYPES: THE VALUE OF NEWSPAPERS IN LOCAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

Abstract

Survey research with a probability sample of 428 respondents reveals a local electorate can be segmented according to type and amount of media use in juxtaposition with political participation, community involvement, and demographic variables by using an innovative use typology. Study results indicate use of newspapers (as opposed to television) in local election campaigns would reap greater benefits for political candidates in terms of reaching the most interested, involved, connected, and likely voters. The results also have implications for newspaper advertising departments.

SEGMENTING THE ELECTORATE BY MEDIA USE TYPES: THE VALUE OF NEWSPAPERS IN LOCAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

A number of researchers have explored the relationship of media use (especially newspapers and television) to political participation (Elliott & Sothirajah, 1993; Brosius & Kepplinger, 1992; Roberts, 1992), community involvement (Stamm, 1985; Fortini-Campbell & Stamm, 1981), and also to demographics (Bogart, 1989; McLeod & Perse, 1994). Similarly to Kosicki, Becker, & Fredin (1994), the current study examines these factors of participation, involvement, and demographics in relation to media use but differs from their study by extending our findings to some suggested practical applications, particularly related to newspapers.

In this study we pose three fundamental research questions to guide our investigations:

RQ1: Do people who use media in a certain way to follow what goes on in local government and public affairs share certain political participation, community involvement, and demographic traits which differ significantly from those who use media in other, distinctly different ways?

RQ2: If the answer to RQ1 is yes, then can unique participation, involvement, and demographic profiles be developed for each media use group?

RQ3: If the answers to RQ1 and RQ2 are both yes, then can those profiles be used to demonstrate one medium (e.g., newspapers) presents a more viable option for political candidates in local elections to communicate with the electorate than another medium (e.g., television)?

Our primary objective focuses on testing the viability of an innovative media use typology in relation to participation, involvement, and demographic variables, with the specific purpose of determining whether application of such a typology might have some value in terms of critical media buying decisions for campaign strategists in local elections--particularly with regard to newspapers. We begin by criticizing the ways in which media use has been operationalized in much previous research.

Many media use studies have treated their subjects or respondents as more reliant on one medium or another without regard for other possible configurations of media use. Specifically missing from previous analyses of media use in relation to other variables are considerations of people who rely equally on newspapers and television for news as well as those who rely on neither. As Gaziano (1990) has observed, several media use types have rarely been studied including "(1) those who rely on both newspapers and television for news, [and] (2) those who rely on neither newspapers nor television" (4).

We limit political participation in this study to voting and being registered to vote and do not consider such factors as campaign activities, political socialization, or sophistication because those topics go beyond the scope and focus of our inquiry.

To incorporate community involvement indicators into the study, conceptually we turned to Stamm (1985) who "proposed to strengthen the descriptive power of the 'community involvement' concept by trying to specify the nature of communicative behavior which involvement entails" (2). Stamm (1985) outlined five levels of involvement including 1) attending, 2) orienting, 3) agreeing, 4) connecting, and 5) manipulating, each of which is operationally described in the Method section along with the demographic variables.

As indicated, ultimately we seek to apply our findings to recommendations regarding the employment of newspapers in local election campaigns. Although scholarly interest in the relationship between media use and political campaigns abounds, the vast majority of research attention has focused on the national level of analysis (Atkin, 1980; Hy, 1973; Johnson, 1993; Martin, 1976) and especially on presidential elections (Becker & McCombs, 1978; Chaffee & Choe, 1980; Graber, 1976; Lenart, 1994; Owen, 1991; Pfau, Diedrich, Larson, & Van Winkle, 1995). With a few exceptions (e.g., Kosicki, Becker, & Fredin, 1994; McCleneghan, 1980; Mulder, 1979), researchers seemingly have neglected local election campaigns and the contributions of newspapers in those campaigns. As O'Keefe (1975) has stated, "detailed analyses of the conduct of campaigns within communities, particularly vis-a-vis mass media, is often lacking"

(155). Along these lines, Kosicki, Becker, and Fredin (1994) observed:

> Although the role of mass media in national and state elections has been detailed extensively over the years, the picture is less clear in the case of local elections. Yet, local elections occur more frequently, are closer to people's everyday lives, and may have more direct and immediate consequences for life in a given community than more remote political choices. (76)

By extension, this research focus beyond the local community has naturally led to an inordinate amount of attention devoted to the role of television in campaigns (Andreoli & Worchel, 1978; Atkin & Heald, 1976; Joslyn, 1980; Patterson & McClure, 1976; Pfau, 1990; McClure & Patterson, 1976; West, 1993) and a concurrent diminishing of newspapers' contributions.

With regard to newspapers' roles, even at the local level investigations into the relative importance of newspapers versus television have produced mixed results which seem to have shifted toward newspapers' preeminence over time. For example, in the late 1970s some researchers found television to be perceived as a more credible, truthful, and important source of local news than newspapers (Abel & Wirth, 1977; Reagan & Zenaty, 1979). At the same time, Greenberg and Roloff (1974) stated viewers use television as a source of entertainment while newspapers are used as a source of information. Then, in the 1980s, other researchers found newspapers the people's choice for local news (Lemert, 1980; Reagan & Ducey, 1983). Interestingly, one of the researchers (Reagan) who had found support for television in 1979 later reported newspapers surpassed other media as the primary source of information for local news (Reagan & Zenaty, 1979; Reagan & Ducey, 1983). In terms of campaign communication in local elections specifically, Robinson and Sheehan (1983) discovered newspapers provided the best vehicle for communicating what the candidate wants to get across to the electorate.

One of the most recent, and perhaps most definitive, studies comparing newspapers to television as news sources comes from Stempel (1991) who argued the need to distinguish between local, state, and national levels of analysis. The author reported people "do use television more for [some] types of national news,...but clearly it is newspapers they turn to for local news" (8). Stempel (1991) also maintained "informing the public ought not to be a matter of competition between newspapers and television, but rather a matter of complementary efforts" (8) because many people rely equally on both media.

Method

To test our research questions, we conducted a study in a medium-size (population approximately 200,000) Southeastern community during late April and early May 1994. The research methodology employed a probability telephone survey using numbers randomly generated by computer. Prospective respondents were screened on the basis of age (18 or older) and residency (i.e., living within the city's limits) in order to assure they had been eligible to register and vote in the last citywide election.

In addition to the two political participation questions, we also tapped into community involvement. We previously alluded to the five dimensions proposed by Stamm (1985) including attending, orienting, agreeing, connecting, and manipulating. According to Stamm (1985), "attending" involves keeping oneself "informed of activities and changes" (22) in the community. To tap this dimension, respondents were asked how often they follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs (FOLLOW NEWS) with response choices of most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, hardly ever, and never. "Orienting" indicates an individual "thinks about how parts of the community are related, about where the community has been and where it is going" (22). Here we asked respondents how often they think of ideas for improving the community (IDEAS). We opted to combine the levels of "agreeing" (i.e., "sharing concerns and views with others" 22) with "connecting" which Stamm (1985) described as "links with others in the community by talking to them, listening to them, or getting together in some fashion" (22) because both involve interpersonal communication and seem conceptually very similar. Our question here asked how often respondents get people together to talk about the community's needs (PEOPLE TOGETHER). "Manipulating" focuses on whether "the individual works for change in the community," (22) and accordingly we asked how often the study participants work to bring about change in the community (WORK FOR CHANGE). All three "how often" questions employed response choices of very often, often, not very often, and never.

As to media use measures, respondents were asked how much they used newspapers and television to follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs. Response choices here were a lot, some, only now and then, hardly ever, and never.

Finally, the interview schedule included questions about basic demographics including gender, race, home ownership, age, occupation, years lived in the city, income, political party, and education. To assure the random selection of respondents within households, interviewers first asked to speak with the resident over 18 who most recently celebrated a birthday.

Results

Of 746 eligible respondents contacted, 432 interviews were conducted for a completion rate of 58 percent. A total of 334 calls were terminated as ineligible participants on the basis of the age or residence screening factors.[1] Frequency distributions later revealed four respondents were under the age of 18 at the time of the last city-wide election, and they were dropped from the analysis. Results, therefore, are based on 428 valid cases.

Table 1 compares the demographics of the sample with those of the general population. As indicated, with two exceptions, the percentages are quite comparable. Occupational differences between the sample and population may have been due to coding differences for technical and professional occupations. Also, although blacks were oversampled in the study, they still were underrepresented in relation to population percentages.

To create the media use typology, respondents were placed into one of four groups. Although the stimulus questions regarding the use of newspapers and television offered five response choices, only the most extreme answer (i.e., "a lot") was used to generate the typology. Those who answered "a lot" for both newspapers and television were assigned to the BOTH group (n = 158). The next group, NEWSPAPERS, were those who answered "a lot" for newspapers but not for television (n = 50). The third TELEVISION group consisted of those who responded "a lot" for television but not for newspapers (n = 110), and respondents who did not answer "a lot" for either medium constituted the NEITHER category (n = 97).

To discern use group differences in terms of political participation and demographics, we employed t-tests on each of those variables. Only two variables, gender and occupation, produced no significant differences between any of the media use groups. Although many of the statistically significant findings related to the NEITHER group, and sharply distinguished those respondents from study participants in the other three, each use category did emerge with its own particular characteristics.

Table 2 reports the means and significance levels of participation and demographic differences between the NEITHER group and each of the other three. In Table 3, part A shows the significant demographic differences between TELEVISION and NEWSPAPERS. Part B compares TELEVISION against BOTH while part C shows NEWSPAPERS compared to BOTH.

Finally, we analyzed use group differences with regard to the community involvement variables again using t-tests. Tables 4 and 5 relate to significant media use group differences regarding those measures. Table 4 again compares the NEITHER group with the other three. Part A of Table 5 reveals TELEVISION differed significantly from NEWSPAPERS only on the FOLLOW NEWS variable. At the same time, significant differences emerged between TELEVISION and BOTH on all four involvement indicators as indicated in part B. Part C in Table 5 depicts only one significant difference between NEWSPAPERS and BOTH, and again it involved FOLLOW NEWS. In Tables 2 to 5, probabilities are indicated by asterisks and are keyed at the bottom of the tables. Scale values are shown in parentheses following the variable labels.

An analysis of the data in Tables 2 to 5 indicates people in a particular use group do share certain participation, involvement, and demographic traits which differ significantly from those of the other groups (RQ1). The analysis also allows for the development of narrative profiles regarding each media use group (RQ2). Our comments are based on statistically significant findings except where noted. It seems appropriate to begin by comparing and contrasting the two extreme groups, NEITHER and BOTH, followed by an assessment of TELEVISION and NEWSPAPERS.

NEITHER:

Compared to each of the other three groups, these respondents have lived less time in the community, are less politically active in terms of voting and being registered to vote, follow what goes on in local government and local public affairs less often, and are considerably less involved in the community. They are less likely to be home owners, tend to lean toward the Republican party, and are significantly younger. They also are significantly less educated than NEWSPAPERS and have a median annual household income of about $26,000.

BOTH:

By contrast, this group has lived in the community the longest of the four groups. Compared to the other three use classifications, they have the highest levels of voting and being registered to vote, of following what goes on, and of community involvement. They also have the oldest median age, are more likely to be a homeowner than a renter, and tend to be an Independent politically. They have more than two years of college and an average annual income of about $25,000. They feel significantly closer to the community than NEITHER and TELEVISION but not NEWSPAPERS.

TELEVISION:

These individuals have lived in the community about as long as NEWSPAPERS and BOTH. They are somewhat less likely than those groups to vote or be registered to vote and to be a homeowner but not significantly so. Also compared to NEWSPAPERS and BOTH, they are significantly less likely to follow what goes on and somewhat less likely to be involved in the community. They lean somewhat toward the Democratic party and are slightly older than

NEWSPAPERS but significantly younger than BOTH. Their education mean shows them having more than a high school diploma but slightly less than some college. They have the lowest educational attainment of the four groups, and the differences were significant in relation to the NEWSPAPERS and BOTH groups. They also significantly have the lowest average annual income of the four use groups at $18,000.

NEWSPAPERS:

This category of study participants are about as equally likely to have voted and be registered to vote, to be a homeowner, and to be involved in the community as BOTH. The are significantly more likely to follow what goes on than TELEVISION but significantly less likely than BOTH. This group is significantly more Republican than TELEVISION and BOTH but not NEITHER. They are the most likely to be Caucasian (100 percent of the respondents in this group were); they have at least a college degree and an annual income of over $30,000.

Discussion

These data seem to support the utility of an expanded typology for examining the relationship between media use and social science constructs such as political participation and community involvement as well as demographic data. For example, more than half of this sample consisted of those who rely on both newspapers and television equally (31 percent) and those who do not rely highly on either medium (21 percent)--two groups previously overlooked in research dealing with media use and sociopolitical constructs. In those previous studies, therefore, data relating to these important groups have been hidden from analyses which could have led some researchers to faulty or flawed conclusions. The typology employed in this study revealed key differences between these newly constructed media use groups, and some were tellingly significant. Had we followed the precedent of previous media use operationalization schemes, these important and significant use distinctions on the political participation, community involvement, and demographic variables also would have failed to emerge.

We now turn to our third research question of whether one medium presents a more viable option for candidates in local elections than others. The answer looms as a resounding yes, and the medium is newspapers. In this regard, findings from our tests of the media use typology in relation to participation, involvement, and demographics may proffer some practical implications for participants in local election campaigns and also for newspaper advertising departments. First, although they represented one-fifth of the population in this sample, it would seem a fruitless waste of resources for those running local campaigns to attempt cultivating people in the NEITHER group. Their low media use alone would render reaching them difficult at best. Moreover, they are the least interested, involved, and connected in the community, and are the least likely to vote anyway. Second, we have observed numerous local campaigns where managers, consultants, and the candidates themselves have opted to allocate their advertising budgets primarily on expensive 30- and 60-second television spots, running a few smaller newspaper ads only during the waning days of the campaign. For example, during the most recent citywide campaign in the study community, reports filed with the county election office revealed candidates for local office allocated 70 percent of their total advertising budgets to television. Seven individuals elected to the city council as a result of the campaign expended a combined total of $278,377 in their successful bids for office. Individually, total expenditures for these seven ranged between $4,834 and $85,874. Interestingly, two of those winners whose campaign budgets were among the lowest ($4,834 and $12,759) advertised only in newspapers. Ironically, having less resources available could have made the more expensive medium of television prohibitive, forcing those candidates into what was probably the more cost-effective avenue of print. Yet, the TELEVISION group, while constituting more than one-fourth of the citizenry, still follows what goes on significantly less than the NEWSPAPERS and BOTH groups and is somewhat less involved, connected, and likely to vote than those groups. On the other hand, targeting NEWSPAPERS specifically probably would not be wise because their numbers are smaller (only 11.6 percent in this study). It would seem, therefore, the best group to concentrate on should be BOTH. They are the largest segment (37 percent of the electorate), the most interested, connected, and involved, and are the most likely to vote. Some might argue television ads do reach this group because these people are high users of both media. True as this may be, we would counter there is a substantial difference between a 30-second spot, which--at great expense--must be aired repeatedly to achieve any effective penetration, and a much less expensive full-scale newspaper campaign in terms of the amount and quality of information conveyed. Based on the study's results, we could make a case the BOTH group wants more information than they can obtain from a television-based campaign. We base this argument on the BOTH group's high levels of involvement, interest, participation, connection with the community, and their high use of multiple media. We further contend several well-timed, full-page newspaper ads providing detailed discussions of issues and positions would have far greater impact on the BOTH group than a barrage of brief television spots, ultimately proving more cost effective. There would be other benefits as well. For one thing, unlike the television spot which appears briefly and is gone, the newspaper ad can be retained, referred back to, and shared with others. Also, in the process of targeting the BOTH group through a newspaper campaign, one would also pick up the NEWSPAPER group, thereby extending the reach to almost half the population and, according to our calculations based on study findings, nearly three-fourths of those who are likely voters. Additionally, recent research has shown individuals are more cognitively involved and more regularly attendant when reading newspapers about a campaign than when viewing television (Culbertson, Evarts, Richard, Sandedll & Stempell III, 1994).

At any rate, local political campaign strategists responsible for making critical media buying decisions might profit from employing the media use typology proposed here in research of their own in order to identify and segment important markets and publics within the electorate. To the extent other local communities might mirror the one reported here, such strategists also would undoubtedly benefit by diverting their scarce resources away from television and toward a newspaper campaign. Such a campaign should include both paid advertisements and the solicitation of "free" exposure involving news coverage of issue positions and events as well as editorial endorsements.

At the same time, newspaper advertising departments might also benefit from conducting similar research in order to demonstrate the value and viability of newspaper advertising to local campaign candidates and their managers. As Cameron, Nowack, and Krugman (1993) have observed, "better prepared sales people, capable of market planning and interpretation of research, would be welcomed by local advertisers" (70). Certainly candidates for political office can be numbered among those local advertisers and should equally welcome such an approach.

NOTES

1. Other nonresponses included incomplete call backs, 42; no answer after three calls, 139; busy after three calls, 17;

answering machine after three calls, 81; business or organization, 308; non-working numbers, 1,008; and car phone or pager, 56.

TABLE 1

Sample and Population Demographics

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

	This Sample	Population
GENDER		
Male	46.2%	46.3%
Female	53.8%	53.7%
RACE		
White	69.0%	59.6%
Black	24.5%	38.9%
Other	6.5%	1.5%
RESIDENCE TYPE		
Own	60.5%	58.1%
Rent	39.5%	41.9%
AGE		
18-29	22.1%	23.1%
30-39	18.2%	22.4%
40-49	18.1%	16.6%
50-59	14.0%	12.2%
60-69	9.8%	12.2%
70+	15.7%	13.2%
OCCUPATION		
Manager/Professional	42.6%	28.8%
Technical	24.1%	35.1%
Service	14.3%	13.6%
Production	8.4%	9.1%
Labor	10.5%	12.6%

NOTE: Income comparisons are not possible due to category differences between those used in the study and Census Bureau classifications.

TABLE 2

Means and Significance Levels
Participation and Demographic Differences
NEITHER
by
TELEVISION, NEWSPAPERS, and BOTH

GROUPS:

	NEITHER	TELEVISION	NEWSPAPERS	BOTH
PARTICIPATION:				
VOTED (1) no (2) yes	1.4	1.6***	1.7***	1.8***
REGISTERED (1) no (2) yes	1.7	1.8*	1.9*	1.9**
DEMOGRAPHICS:				
RENT (1) OWN (2)	1.5	n.s.	1.7**	1.7**
RACE (1) black (2) white	1.8	n.s.	2.0**	n.s.
AGE (1-4)	1.9	2.5**	2.4*	2.8***
TIME IN CITY (1-5)	2.6	3.2**	3.1*	3.3***
INCOME (1-6)	3.5	2.8*	n.s.	n.s.
POLITICAL PARTY (1) strong Democrat (4) pure Independent (7) strong Republican	4.4	n.s.	n.s	n.s.
EDUCATION (1-9)	4.5	n.s.	5.7**	n.s.

* $p<.05$
** $p<.01$
*** $p<.001$

TABLE 3

Means and Significance Levels
Demographic Differences

Part A: TELEVISION by NEWSPAPERS

VARIABLES:	TELEVISION	NEWSPAPERS
RACE (1) black (2) white	1.7	2.0***
INCOME (1-6)	2.8	4.0**
POLITICAL PARTY (1) strong Democrat (4) pure Independent (7) strong Republican	3.9	4.8*
EDUCATION (1-9)	3.9	5.3***

Part B: TELEVISION by BOTH

	TELEVISION	BOTH
AGE (1-4)	2.4	2.8*
INCOME (1-6)	2.8	3.6**
EDUCATION (1-9)	3.9	4.5**

Part C: NEWSPAPERS by BOTH

	NEWSPAPERS	BOTH
RACE (1) black (2) white	2.0	1.7***
AGE (1-4)	2.4	2.8*
POLITICAL PARTY (1) strong Democrat (4) pure Independent (7) strong Republican	4.8	4.0*

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* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

TABLE 4

Means and Significance Levels
Community Involvement Differences
NEITHER
by
TELEVISION, NEWSPAPERS, and BOTH

GROUPS:

VARIABLES:	NEITHER	TELEVISION	NEWSPAPERS	BOTH
FOLLOW NEWS (1-5)	3.6	n.s.	4.4***	4.7***
IDEAS (1-4)	2.4	2.7*	2.8**	3.0***
PEOPLE TOGETHER (1-4)	1.7	2.0*	2.2***	2.3***
WORK FOR CHANGE (1-4)	1.8	2.2**	2.2**	2.5***

* $p<.05$
** $p<.01$
*** $p<.001$

TABLE 5

Means and Significance Levels
Community Involvement Differences

Part A: TELEVISION by NEWSPAPERS

	TELEVISION	NEWSPAPERS
VARIABLES:		
FOLLOW NEWS (1-5)	3.9	4.4*

Part B: TELEVISION by BOTH

	TELEVISION	BOTH
FOLLOW NEWS (1-5)	3.9	4.7***
IDEAS (1-4)	2.7	3.9**
PEOPLE TOGETHER (1-4)	2.0	2.3*
WORK FOR CHANGE (1-4)	2.2	2.5**

Part C: NEWSPAPERS by BOTH

	NEWSPAPERS	BOTH
FOLLOW NEWS (1-5)	4.4	4.7**

* $p<.05$
** $p<.01$
*** $p<.001$

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The Political Dance:

A Test of Agenda-Setting Effects in the 1994 Texas Gubernatorial Election

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Presented to

Newspaper Division
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
Washington D.C.
August 9-12, 1995

ABSTRACT

This study measured the effect of news releases issued by candidates in the 1994 Texas gubernatorial election on the policy issue agenda, tone and focus of news coverage of the race. While some influence from the news releases was found, the strongest influences on coverage by three daily newspapers were in the other direction. Political coverage by the newspapers tended to influence the content of subsequent news releases. These data support critics who charge that the media are largely to blame for the tone of campaign coverage.

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The Political Dance:

A Test of Agenda-Setting Effects in the 1994 Texas Gubernatorial Election

Political campaign coverage is a like a dance. Somebody leads and somebody follows. In 1979 Gans wrote that "although it takes two to tango, either sources or journalists can lead, but more often than not, sources do the leading."[1]

Clearly, reporters receive most of their election information through routine channels, such as official proceedings, press conferences, non-spontaneous events, and press releases.[2] This reliance has led some researchers to question the role of news sources in deciding the media agenda. Reese and Danielian wrote:

> These questions are becoming more important given the central role of the media in political life. Consequently, we need to be fully aware of all the factors that set the agenda of the media, causing them to converge on certain issues, sources and themes.[3]

We decided to test this premise in the 1994 Texas gubernatorial election by measuring one overt tactic used by candidates to control the election agenda: the campaign news release.

Theoretical Framework

Since the seminal 1972 article by McCombs and Shaw[4], the focus of most agenda-setting studies has been the impact of the news media on the salience of *issues* on the public agenda. To that end, scholars have accumulated ample evidence to support the idea that the news agenda, to a considerable degree, sets the public agenda of issues.

In the 22 years since the first agenda-setting study was published, the theory also has grown beyond a simple measure of media effects. Studies have flipped the news agenda from independent variable to dependent variable. While the original research question asked, "Who sets the public agenda?," the question now has been rephrased to ask, "Who sets the news agenda?" Although we know about a number of sources that effect the news agenda -- from major or "elite" news organizations to the attitudes and beliefs of individual journalists[5] -- less attention has been given to the sources routinely used by journalists to obtain political campaign news.

Not only does the agenda-setting model now look upstream for influences, the long-term marriage of agenda-setting research to issues, often election issues, is giving way to a renewed and expanded look at what makes up an agenda. In their most abstract form, a set of objects -- issues, topics, events, persons, etc. -- are the first layer of the agenda.

Media messages give these objects form and meaning. In other words, each issue or event has a certain set of attributes -- attributes that are defined by the same process of inclusion and exclusion at work with issues.[6] Election coverage not only reports about the candidates' positions on issues, but the candidates' personalities and campaign strategies as well. As McCombs said in an article summing up the history of agenda-setting research:

> News is not just rational discourse, not just educational presentations on the issues of the day. ***News has tone and drama.*** News communicates much more than the facts. A psychologist would say that news messages are both cognitive and affective. A journalist would say that the news is a blend of information and entertainment. (Emphasis Added)[7]

This notion of using the media to control public agendas -- issues as well as images -- is understood beyond the academy. Contemporary political campaigns wrestle for control of the news agenda -- and through it the public agenda -- using a variety of techniques. Of all the techniques employed by campaigns to disseminate their message, the news release is one of the few directed exclusively at the media.

Because candidates' news releases provide a visible indicator of the agenda a candidate wants to advance, they are a good place to look for overt attempts by candidates to influence the news agenda. The study reported here does just that. We examined news releases and news coverage published in the final phase of the 1994 Texas gubernatorial election. Adopting the idea of an expanded agenda of attributes, we looked at more than policy issues. We also looked for influences on the tone and focus of election coverage.

Previous Research

Findings from previous research suggest that official news sources, such as the president and government agencies, do influence the news agenda. One study compared the issues stressed in four State of the Union addresses by three different presidents to those issues covered by the news media before and after the speeches. Each of the cases studied by Wanta and his colleagues used a content analysis to determine the issues stressed by the presidents and the issues stressed by the media before and after the speeches. [8] The data indicated that presidents Nixon and Reagan (during his first term) apparently influenced subsequent media coverage through their State of the Union addresses, while Carter and Reagan (during his second term) were apparently influenced by prior media coverage.

Roberts and McCombs[9] studied political advertisements in connection with the 1990 Texas gubernatorial election to help answer the question: "Who sets the media agenda?" Roberts later compared the attributes of political ads -- attacks and counterattacks -- in the 1992 Ohio senatorial campaign.[10] This work suggested that media agendas are influenced by candidate advertising. The study did not, however, look beyond advertising to other tactics -- such as news releases -- used by the candidates to advance their messages or themes.

Although public relations practitioners have studied the influence and use of news releases, releases have not been widely studied by media effects scholars. As Morton and Warren note, "Press releases seem to be the poor stepchild of journalism research: despite voluminous research on editorial output and decision-making, little has been done on the public relations side of the ledger."[11]

In a study of the public information offices of six state government agencies and the news content of the eight major dailies in Louisiana, Turk found that the news content reflected the agenda of the news releases provided by government agencies.[12] While Martin and Singletary,[13] Walters and Walters,[14] and Gandy[15] also studied and wrote about the use and influence of government agency news releases on media coverage, political campaign news releases have received only limited scholarly attention.

In the 1970s, two studies analyzed news releases to determine the extent to which releases were the news source for campaign stories published in newspapers. Bolden tracked Texas gubernatorial campaign releases in the 1970 election but found that newspapers published fewer than 20 percent of the statements contained in the news releases of one candidate.[16]

Kaid conducted another study of the use of campaign releases by newspapers.[17] Like Bolden, she was primarily concerned with whether or not newspapers published the releases verbatim. While she found that 26 news releases generated only 7.6 percent of the stories in an Illinois congressional campaign, she did not look at other ways in which the releases may have influenced election coverage.

In 1982, Vermeer conducted a more comprehensive study of campaign releases. She, too, was concerned primarily with counting and categorizing releases, not with measuring their agenda-setting potential.[18]

A 1980 study of campaign press releases by Atwood tracked the way information disseminated by political candidates became a measuring stick by which voters decided among political alternatives.[19] The study organized data around two waves of interviews of randomly selected respondents in Illinois. Atwood compared results from the interviews to analysis of 138 press releases issued by two Congressional candidates and 274 news stories published in nine newspapers from early August through the election. He used cross-lagged correlation analysis to test time-order effects of the flow of information from news release to news content; from news to political discussion; and from media and discussion to what voters reported they liked or disliked about the candidates. Atwood found that late campaign news story content appeared to be heavily dependent upon the candidates' news releases.

Atwood also found an interaction between news releases and news coverage of *issues* that differed in intensity depending on the candidate. He also looked at *focus* but defined it around dichotomous brackets: candidate characteristics and campaign issues. This division does not allow for data collection on the more complex horse race aspects of the campaign (such as polls, endorsements and campaign contributions) that media critics contend receive excessive news coverage.

While scholars have shown an interest in the link between official sources -- such as news releases -- and subsequent news coverage, a number of important questions remain unanswered. Three of these questions will be explored by this study, as follows:

- Do news releases influence which campaign issues receive coverage?
- Is the tone of election coverage -- positive or negative -- influenced by news releases?
- Is the focus of election coverage -- issues versus candidate images and qualifications versus horse race aspects of the campaign -- influenced by candidate releases?

Campaign Setting

The 1994 Texas gubernatorial election pitted the Democratic incumbent governor against the son of a former president. Ann Richards, one of the most popular governors in recent Texas history, was best known for her quick wit and star quality. Her challenger, Republican George W. Bush, was best known for being part owner of the Texas Ranger baseball team and a man with a serious nature.

Although hotly contested, the race lacked the spark and fire that characterized the 1990 election when Richards defeated multimillionaire Clayton Williams. Bush won the 1994 contest by garnering 54 percent of the vote.

Method

We analyzed the content of news releases issued by the candidates and news coverage of the race by three Texas daily newspapers. The study began Labor Day (September 5, 1994), which is the traditional start of the general election campaign season, and ran through election day (November 8, 1994). The unit of analysis for the newspapers was the news story, including editorials and columns but excluding photos and editorial cartoons. The unit of analysis for the candidates' news releases was the individual release.

News releases were collected weekly from the Austin campaign headquarters of both Richards and Bush. Unfortunately, the Richards' campaign was unable to provide copies of releases issued in the last week before the election. Campaign staff said few releases were distributed during this time, however, so the effect on the validity of the results was minimal.

Newspaper stories were collected from three Texas daily newspapers: *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Houston Chronicle* and *The Austin American-Statesman*. According to 1993 data compiled by the Texas Press Association, these newspapers account for about one-third of the daily newspaper circulation in the state. The Dallas and Houston papers are the two largest dailies in Texas. Both are regarded as editorially "conservative," and both endorsed Bush in the general election. Although it has a smaller circulation, *The Austin American-Statesman* was chosen as a way to balance data sources. As the only daily in the state capital, the newspaper devotes considerable space to political and government issues, is widely regarded as editorially "liberal" by Texas standards and endorsed Richards for a second term.

Separate coding instructions were developed for releases and news stories and pre-tested on a subset of data. Two coders then analyzed the releases and news stories. A sub-sample of data was coded to test intercoder reliability. Using Holsti's formula for determining the reliability of nominal data,[20] the intercoder reliability coefficient was .937 for news releases and .958 for news stories.

Policy Issues: If a policy issue was mentioned in either the news releases or the news stories, it was counted as a "hit." Policy issues were identified by reading news releases and news stories about the campaign. Most releases and stories had multiple "hits," that is they contained references to more than one policy issue. Initially, 25 categories were established: crime, education, welfare, environment, property rights, tort reform, immigration, state funding and budget, domestic violence, insurance, diversity, women's issues, trade, foreign relations, abortion, economic development, family values, juvenile justice, initiative and referendum, border issues, personal responsibility, substance abuse, baseball strike, lottery and gambling, and "other." Policy issues with either none or only one "hit" were combined with related issues, leaving a total of 16 categories for analysis.

Focus: The focus of each news story and release was defined as falling into one of three broad content areas: (1) issues of public policy; (2) activities relating to the conduct of the campaign; or (3) the style, experience and image of the candidates. This three-way division is similar to that used by McCombs and Shaw in the landmark Chapel Hill agenda-setting study. [21]

Public policy issues involve statutory or administrative duties of the office of governor or over which the governor exercises leadership or influence. Activities and issues relating to the campaign include such things as polls; advertisements; debates and other campaign tactics; factors that influence the outcome of an election, such as voter turnout; and endorsements, campaign contributions and fundraising.

Stories and releases about the candidates address their leadership ability, qualifications, professional and personal integrity, personality traits and style. While most of the news stories and news releases touched on more than one category, coders identified a primary or dominant focus for each news story and release. This dominant focus was used to answer each of the research questions relating to focus.

Tone: For news releases, a "negative" tone was one in which the candidate criticizes an opponent's actions, background or position on an issue. Statements such as the following were considered negative:

> "Republican gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush today said Governor Richards' failure to go to bat for Texas with her friend Bill Clinton is costing the state millions of dollars in federal funds to help defray the cost of jailing illegal immigrants." *(George Bush release dated October 7, 1994)*
>
> "George W. Bush claims to be a successful businessman, but if he didn't know about the financial troubles of Harken Energy, then he was not fulfilling his responsibilities to the company's stockholders," said Ann W. Richards. *(Ann Richards release dated October 26, 1994)*

A "positive" tone was one in which the candidate makes a positive statement about planned future action or in which the candidate's accomplishments or experience are praised. Statements such as the following were considered positive:

> "We're building a Texas where our children and grandchildren can prosper," Richards said. "We have a vision of the future where the sky is the only limit. This state is leading the nation in job growth. Last year we created more new jobs than California, New York and Florida put together," Richards said. "Businesses are coming to Texas in record numbers. And they are coming because we have the best workers, the best work ethic, of any state in the country." (*Ann Richards release dated September 16, 1994*)
>
> George W. Bush has presented a blueprint for the future of Texas, a plan of action to improve the lives of all Texans. He has shared his vision with the people and he will be elected Governor. (*George Bush release dated October 19, 1994*)

Coders counted the number of positive and negative statements in each release. If most of the statements were negative, the release was coded as negative in tone. Conversely, if most of the statements were positive, the release was coded as positive in tone. When a release contained an equal number of positive and negative statements it was coded as "balanced." When no value was implied in the majority of statements, as in an announcement of schedules or appointments, the statement or release was coded "neutral."

For newspaper stories, coders considered only the first 10 paragraphs and the headline to define tone. The idea of considering only the lead portions of the story was adapted from methodology employed by Edelstein, *et al.*[22] They used only the first four paragraphs and the headline in their work on problematic framing.

In line with the coding of news releases, a "negative" tone was one in which a candidate, surrogate, spokesperson or group criticizes a candidate's conduct, personal or professional integrity, or one in which the position taken on an issue is criticized. Statements such as the following were considered negative:

> In a new round of televised attacks Friday, Gov. Ann Richards warned that Republican George W. Bush is "not what he claims to be," and Mr. Bush denounced her "failed liberal record." (*Dallas Morning News, October 29, 1994*)
>
> Two Corpus Christi educator groups criticized a high school assembly that featured GOP gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush's mother, wife and supporter Nolan Ryan. . . . "The Ray High School students and teachers attended the mandatory school assembly. . .were told they would learn a valuable lesson on literacy. Instead, they were given a lesson on. . .dishonesty and deception," said Kathy Boyd, association president. (*Dallas Morning News, October 28, 1994*)

A "positive" news tone was one about plans for the future or past accomplishments or one in which the candidate is praised. Statements such as the following were considered positive:

> When it comes to selling Texas to businesses around the world and slashing bureaucratic barriers, Ms. Richards wins accolades. "She understands the importance of business to the state and as a political issue," said Bill Miller, an Austin political consultant who has clients from both parties but is not involved in the governor's race. "She has shown a strong willingness to lure businesses here and make them feel welcome." (*Dallas Morning News, October 29, 1994*)

> Mr. Bush visited two black churches in Houston, where he noted his work for an inner-city youth program while he was growing up. And he reminded the congregations that as managing general partner of the Texas Rangers he personally recruited the only African-American part-owner, Dallas businessman Comer Cottrell, in the major leagues. (*Dallas Morning News, October 31, 1994*)

A news story was coded "positive" if most of the statements in the first 10 paragraphs were positive and coded "negative" if most of the statements were negative. When the story lead contained an equal number of positive and negative statements, it was coded as "balanced." When no value was implied, as in an announcement of schedules or appointments, the statement was coded "neutral."

Time Periods: For some of the analysis, we divided data into two five-week periods. *Time One* was September 5 to October 8. *Time Two* was October 9 to November 8. Dividing the fall campaign into two time periods of five weeks each enabled researchers to track agenda-setting effects over time through the use of cross-lag correlation analysis. Although scholars have not defined an optimum time span for observing agenda-setting effects, there is agreement that the effect can be detected based on coverage that occurs within a few months to a few weeks of the measurement.[23]

Findings

The two candidates issued 96 news releases between September 5 and November 8, 1994. Bush issued 51 releases, or 53 percent, and Richards issued 45 releases, or 47 percent.[24] The three newspapers published 248 stories about the gubernatorial campaign during the period studied. The *Morning News* published 117 stories, or 47 percent. The Austin paper published 70 stories on the election, or 28 percent of the total. *The Houston Chronicle* published 61, or 25 percent.

Findings Relating to Issues The first step in analysis was to look at the relationship between the issues that received attention from the candidates and the issues that received press attention. For data analysis, issues were collapsed into the following 16 categories: tort reform/insurance, crime, welfare, education, environment/property rights, state funding/budget, diversity (including gubernatorial appointments of women and minorities), women's issues/domestic violence, trade, abortion, economic development, juvenile justice, border issues, personal responsibility, lottery/gambling, and other (including the previous categories of immigration, foreign relations, family values, initiative and referendum, substance abuse, and baseball strike).

Tables 1 and 2 show the frequency and rank order of issues for both the news releases and the newspapers. Education was the most frequently mentioned policy issue on both the candidates' and the newspapers' agendas. The second most discussed issue in the news releases was economic development while crime ranked third. For news stories, the second most discussed issue was crime. Welfare was third.

Separating news releases by candidate showed additional differences in emphasis. As Table 1 shows, issues are mentioned 71 times in Bush's news releases. Juvenile justice was the issue most frequently mentioned by the Republican candidate, followed by a three-way tie between tort reform/insurance, crime, and education. State funding/budget was the issue that rounded out the top five priorities on his agenda.

TABLE 1:
Ranking and Frequency of Each Candidate's News Releases by Policy Issue

	Candidate					
	Combined		*Bush*		*Richards*	
Issues	*f*	Rank	*f*	Rank	*f*	Rank
Tort/Insurance	13	**4.5**	10	**3**	3	**9.5**
Crime	17	**3**	10	**3**	7	**3**
Welfare	9	**7**	5	**7**	4	**6**
Education	24	**1**	10	**3**	14	**2**
Environment/Prop. Rights	8	**8.5**	6	**6**	2	**13**
State Funding/Budget	11	**6**	8	**5**	3	**9.5**
Diversity	2	**15**	0	**14**	2	**13**
Women's Issues	8	**8.5**	3	**9.5**	5	**4**
Trade	4	**11**	0	**14**	4	**6**
Abortion	1	**16**	0	**14**	1	**15**
Economic Development	20	**2**	4	**8**	16	**1**
Juvenile Justice	13	**4.5**	11	**1**	2	**13**
Border	4	**11**	0	**14**	4	**6**
Personal Responsibility	3	**13.5**	3	**9.5**	0	**16**
Lottery/Gambling	3	**13.5**	0	**14**	3	**9.5**
Other	4	**11**	1	**11**	3	**9.5**
Total "Hits"	**144**		**71**		**73**	

The fact that Bush's news releases mention juvenile justice most often was not surprising. Throughout the campaign, the Republican candidate hammered Richards on the "skyrocketing" juvenile crime rate -- up 52 percent during her term in office. He released 11 statements regarding this issue, while Richards issued only two. The fact that crime ranked second was also predictable. Bush issued 10 news releases mentioning crime, and ran several political advertisements focusing on the issue. In several Texas polls conducted between February and September, crime was listed as the most important problem facing the country. An October 16, 1994, article in the *American-Statesman* quoted a political science professor as saying:

> It (crime) is probably the No. 1 issue on most people's minds. And frankly, as far as I can tell, he's (Bush) not only found something that's statistically relevant but relevant at a gut level for all of the voters.

Unless he was psychic, Bush apparently used the public opinion polls to help set his issue agenda.

Richards' news releases mentioned issues 73 times. The incumbent governor's top priority was economic development. Again, the high placement of this issue on her agenda was not a surprise. After Richards took office in 1991, the Texas economy boomed. During her term the state ranked ninth in the nation in job growth. Unfortunately for Richards, the economy was not a top issue with the voters. A poll conducted in September showed that only 10 percent of 1,204 respondents thought that jobs and economic development were the most important issues. Crime led with 47 percent, followed by public education at 17 percent. A front page headline in the September 12, 1994, edition of the *American-Statesman* summed up her dilemma: "Richards touts economy, but few voters listen."

Other issues mentioned frequently in Richards' news releases were: education, second; crime, third; women's issues/domestic violence, fourth; and welfare, trade, and border issues, tied at fifth.

As shown in Table 2 issues were mentioned 243 times in *The Dallas Morning News*, 118 times in the *Chronicle*, and 113 times in the *American-Statesman*. The *Chronicle* and the *American-Statesman* both saw education as the number two issue but that is where the similarity ends. *The Morning News* ranked education No. 1; crime No. 2; welfare No. 3; juvenile justice No. 4; and economic development No. 5. The *Chronicle* ranked crime No. 1; education No. 2; juvenile justice No. 3; other (a combination of several issues mentioned earlier) No. 4; and diversity No. 5. The *American-Statesman* ranked environment/property rights No. 1; education No. 2; crime No. 3; welfare No. 4; and state funding/budget No. 5.

TABLE 2:
Ranking and Frequency of Each Newspaper's News Stories by Policy Issue

	Newspaper							
	Combined		*Dallas*		*Houston*		*Austin*	
Issues	*f*	Rank	*f*	Rank	*f*	Rank	*f*	Rank
Tort/Insurance	23	**10**	11	**10**	7	**8.5**	5	**9.5**
Crime	67	**2**	35	**2**	20	**1**	12	**3**
Welfare	45	**3**	25	**3**	9	**6.5**	11	**4**
Education	74	**1**	43	**1**	15	**2**	16	**2**
Environment/Prop. Rights	36	**5**	15	**7**	4	**11**	17	**1**
State Funding/Budget	35	**6**	17	**6**	9	**6.5**	9	**5**
Diversity	27	**9**	12	**9**	10	**5**	5	**9.5**
Women's Issues	10	**14.5**	5	**14.5**	2	**14**	3	**13**
Trade	12	**12.5**	6	**12.5**	0	**16**	6	**8**
Abortion	13	**11**	6	**12.5**	3	**12.5**	4	**11**
Economic Development	34	**7**	19	**5**	7	**8.5**	8	**6**
Juvenile Justice	40	**4**	21	**4**	12	**3**	7	**7**
Border	8	**16**	2	**16**	3	**12.5**	3	**13**
Personal Responsibility	10	**14.5**	7	**11**	1	**15**	2	**15.5**
Lottery/Gambling	12	**12.5**	5	**14.5**	5	**10**	2	**15.5**
Other	28	**8**	14	**8**	11	**4**	3	**13**
Total "Hits"	**474**		**243**		**118**		**113**	

While the Dallas newspaper coverage represented almost half of the news stories analyzed, a comparison of the rank order correlations between pairs of newspapers suggests this did not skew results. As shown in Figure 1, there was a strong similarity of emphasis among the three newspapers for most campaign issues. The difference in emphasis between the Houston and Austin newspapers is primarily due to differences in coverage of environmental and property rights.

Because of the similarity, the newspapers' combined issue agenda can be compared to the individual candidate agendas. Figure 2 shows the rank order correlation between Bush's news releases agenda, Richards' news releases agenda, and the combined issue agenda of the three newspapers.

FIGURE 1:
Correlations Between Pairs of Newspaper Issue Agendas

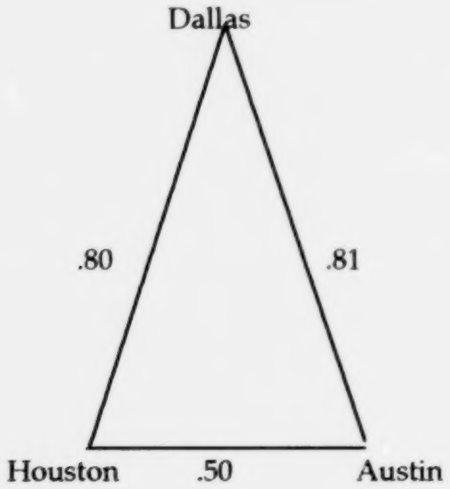
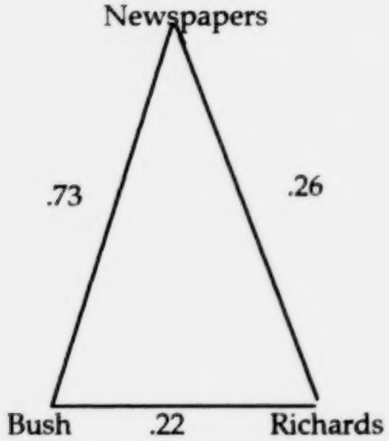

Dallas
.80
.81
Houston
.50
Austin

FIGURE 2:
Correlations Between All Newspapers' Issue Agendas
and Candidates' Issue Agendas


Newspapers
.73
.26
Bush
.22
Richards

228

The comparisons shown in Figure 2 yield a striking finding. While there is a strong correlation (+.73) between Bush's news release agenda and the newspapers' agenda, the correlation (+.26) between Richards' news release agenda and the newspapers' agenda is very weak. If the three agendas had ranked the issues in exactly the same order, the correlation would be 1.00. Apparently, when it came to issues during this election, the newspapers and Bush were talking to each other. Richards, on the other hand, was unable to connect her issue agenda with the newspapers' issue agenda.

The final analysis of issues was to test time-order influences by splitting the data in two time periods, as shown in Tables 3 and 4. While this division blended agendas for newspapers and candidates, it allowed us to study agendas that reflected what the voters were reading during the campaign.

While some issues -- for example, education and crime -- received about the same emphasis throughout the campaign, several issues dramatically shifted their position on the news release agendas late in the campaign. The four issues emphasized most by Richards (economic development, education, crime and women's issues) dominated *Time One.*

In the second time period the reverse occurred. Four priority issues for Bush (education, juvenile justice, tort reform/insurance and state funding/budget) dominated the candidate agenda in *Time Two.* In *Time One* , the newspapers gave the most attention to crime, education and environment/property rights. In *Time Two,* education and crime trade places as do juvenile justice and economic development while environment/property rights falls way back from the third most mentioned issue to tenth.

TABLE 3:
Combined Newspapers' Issue Agenda for Two Time Periods

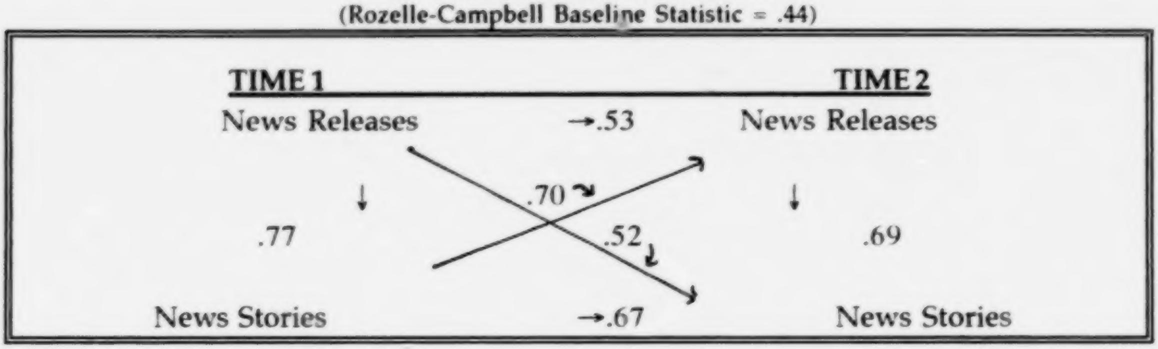
TIME ONE			*TIME TWO*		
Rank	Issue	*f*	Rank	Issue	*f*
1	Crime	23	1	Education	52
2	Education	22	2	Crime	45
3	Environment/Property Rights	21	3.5	Welfare	31
4.5	Welfare	14	3.5	State Funding	31
4.5	Juvenile Justice	14	5.5	Economic Development	26
6	Economic Development	8	5.5	Juvenile Justice	26
8.5	Tort Reform/Insurance	4	7	Other	25
8.5	State Funding	4	8	Diversity	24
8.5	Women's Issues	4	9	Tort Reform/Insurance	19
8.5	Lottery	4	10	Environment/Property Rights	15
12	Diversity	3	11	Abortion	12
12	Personal Responsibility	3	12	Trade	11
12	Other	3	13	Lottery	8
14	Border	2	14	Personal Responsibility	7
15.5	Trade	1	15.5	Women's Issues	6
15.5	Abortion	1	15.5	Border	6

TABLE 4:
Combined Candidates' Issue Agenda for Two Time Periods

TIME ONE			*TIME TWO*		
Rank	Issue	*f*	Rank	Issue	*f*
1	Economic Development	18	1	Education	10
2	Education	14	2	Juvenile Justice	9
3	Crime	11	3.5	Tort Reform/Insurance	7
4	Women's Issues	8	3.5	State Funding	7
5.5	Tort Reform/Insurance	6	5	Crime	6
5.5	Environment/Property Rights	6	6	Welfare	4
7	Welfare	5	8	Environment/Property Rights	2
8.5	State Funding	4	8	Economic Development	2
8.5	Juvenile Justice	4	8	Personal Responsibility	2
11	Trade	3	11.5	Trade	1
11	Border	3	11.5	Border	1
11	Other	3	11.5	Lottery	1
13.5	Diversity	2	11.5	Other	1
13.5	Lottery	2	15	Diversity	0
15.5	Personal Responsibility	1	15	Women's Issues	0
15.5	Abortion	1	15	Abortion	0

A cross-lagged correlation of the various agendas across the two time periods is shown in Figure 3. While the relationship between the news release agenda at *Time One* and the newspapers agenda at *Time Two* is significant (+.52), a much stronger relationship is seen between the newspapers at *Time One* and news releases at *Time Two* (+.70). These findings suggest that while there is a mutual effect, the issue agenda set by the newspapers strongly influences subsequent emphasis given the issues by candidates.

FIGURE 3:
Time-Ordered Relationships (Spearman's Rho Correlations) in the Issue Agenda of News Releases and News Stories
(Rozelle-Campbell Baseline Statistic = .44)



Findings Relating to Focus: The next step in data analysis was to look at the focus given the campaign in news releases and news stories. As shown in Table 5, there was a significant difference between the dominant focus of newspaper election stories and news releases. News stories were almost three times as likely as news releases to focus on the various aspects of the campaign whereas campaign news releases more often focused on public policy issues and candidate image.

TABLE 5:
Dominant Focus of Election News Stories and News Releases

Dominant Focus	Releases		Stories*	
	f	%	f	%
Public Policy	49	**51**	82	**34**
Campaign	17	**18**	121	**49**
Candidate Image	30	**31**	42	**17**
Total	96	**100**	245	**100**

Chi Square 29.60 (df=2) p.0001 .
*** Three missing cases.**

The three newspapers, as shown in Table 6, maintained a similar balance in news focus during the campaign.

TABLE 6:
Dominant Focus of Election Coverage of Three Daily Newspapers

Dominant Focus	Newspaper					
	Dallas		Houston		Austin*	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Public Policy	39	**33**	23	**38**	20	**30**
Campaign	59	**51**	28	**46**	34	**51**
Candidate Image	19	**16**	10	**16**	13	**19**
Total	117	**100**	61	**100**	67	**100**

Chi Square not significant.
***Three missing cases.**

The story changed when the focus of the two candidates was examined. As shown in Table 7, Richards was more than twice as likely as Bush to focus on image issues, her own and her opponent's. On the other hand, Bush issued more than four times as many releases dealing with various aspects of the campaign.

TABLE 7:
Dominant Focus of News Releases of Two Candidates

	Candidate			
	Richards		Bush	
Dominant Focus	f	%	f	%
Public Policy	21	**47**	28	**55**
Campaign	3	**6**	14	**27**
Candidate Image	21	**47**	9	**18**
Total	45	**100**	51	**100**

Chi Square 12.59 (df=2) p.001.

To test for differences over time, data were split into two time periods. As shown in Table 8, the news releases issued by the two candidates maintained fairly even focuses throughout the campaign. Newspapers, on the other hand, moved away from public policy stories late in the campaign to devote more of their attention to the campaign and to candidate images (Table 9).

TABLE 8:
Dominant Focus of Candidate News Releases in Two Time Periods

	Date of Release			
	Time 1		Time 2	
	f	%	f	%
Dominant Focus				
Public Policy	30	**56**	19	**45**
Campaign	7	**13**	10	**24**
Candidate Image	17	**31**	13	**31**
Total	54	**100**	42	**100**

Chi Square not significant.

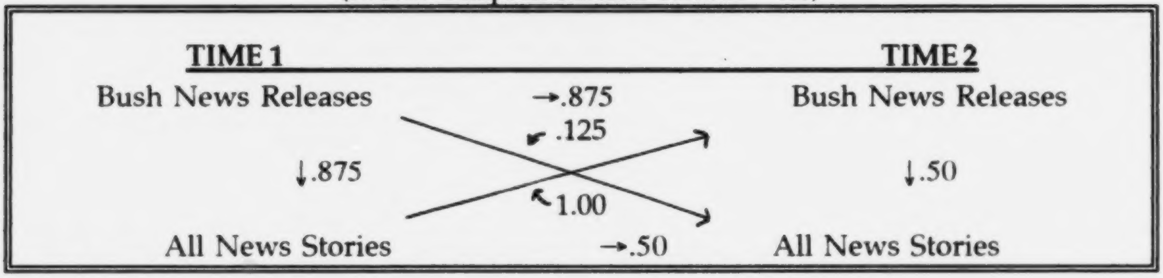
TABLE 9:
Dominant Focus of Election News Stories in Two Time Periods

	Date of Story			
	Time 1*		Time 2**	
Dominant Focus	f	%	f	%
Public Policy	41	**49**	41	**26**
Campaign	34	**40**	87	**54**
Candidate Image	9	**11**	33	**20**
Total	84	**100**	161	**100**

Chi Square 13.66 (df=2) p.002.
*** One missing case.**
**** Two missing cases.**

Using this data it was possible to correlate the focus given the campaign in news releases and the focus in news stories in the two time periods. Figures 4 and 5 show the results of Spearman's Rho correlations of the two time periods for each candidate. From this data, it would appear that the focus of the news releases issued by the Bush campaign began in close harmony to that of the newspapers and then moved to mirror their focus late in the campaign.

FIGURE 4:
Time-Ordered Relationships (Spearman's Rho Correlations) in the Focus of News Releases Issued By Bush and News Stories about the Campaign in Three Texas Daily Newspapers
(Rozelle-Campbell Baseline Statistic = .48)

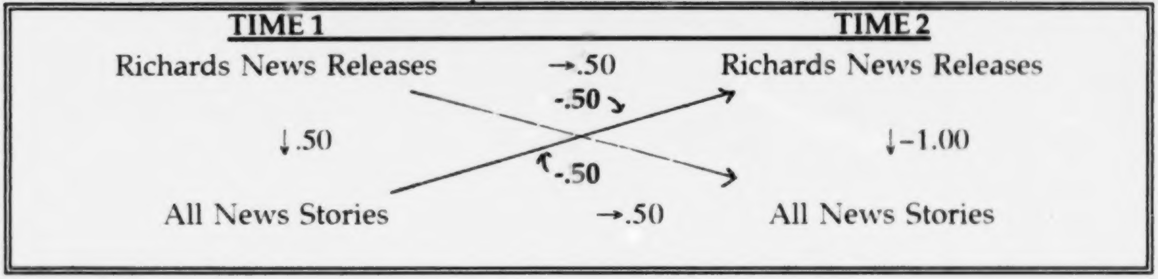

TIME 1
TIME 2
Bush News Releases
→.875
Bush News Releases
.125
↓.875
↓.50
1.00
All News Stories
→.50
All News Stories

The focus of Richards' campaign news releases, however, showed less harmony with the focus of the news coverage in the early stages of the campaign and moved away from the newspapers as the campaign progressed. The time order analysis shows no evidence for influence in either direction.

FIGURE 5:

Time-Ordered Relationships (Spearman's Rho Correlations) in the Focus of News Releases Issued By Richards and News Stories about the Campaign in Three Texas Daily Newspapers

(Rozelle-Campbell Baseline Statistic = -.125)



Findings Relating to Tone: The final step in data analysis was to look at the tone of the news releases and news stories. For purposes of this study, it is important to remember that tone is not intended to measure implied bias or expressed preferences for one candidate over another. Instead, tone measures whether or not the release or news story approached the subject in a predominantly negative or positive manner. As shown in Table 10, there was a significant difference between the tone of new stories and tone of candidate news releases. As might be expected given the advocacy nature of news releases, the proportion of balanced news stories far exceeded that of releases.

In spite of news standards that call for balance in news reporting, 62 percent of the news stories exhibited a distinctly slanted (positive or negative) tone in the first ten paragraphs.[25] While the proportion of negative news stories was only slightly smaller than that of negative news releases, the releases were proportionally twice as likely as newspapers to set a positive tone.

TABLE 10:
Tone of Election News Stories and News Releases

Tone	Releases		Stories	
	f	%	f	%
Negative	40	42	91	37
Positive	50	52	62	25
Balanced	5	6	83	34
Neutral	1	1	12	5
Total	96	101	248	100

Chi Square 42.04 (df=3) p.0001.

Data were split in two time periods to test time-order influences. While the tone of news stories (Table 11) changed little between the two time periods, the tone of candidate releases (Table 12) shifted dramatically. In the earlier time period, most news releases were positive. As election day neared, more were negative.

TABLE 11:
Tone of Election News Stories in Two Time Periods

	Date of Story			
	Time 1		Time 2	
Tone	f	%	f	%
Negative	32	38	59	36
Positive	24	28	38	23
Balanced/Neutral	29	34	66	41
Total	85	100	163	100

Chi Square 1.32 not significant.

TABLE 12:
Tone of Candidate News Releases in Two Time Periods*

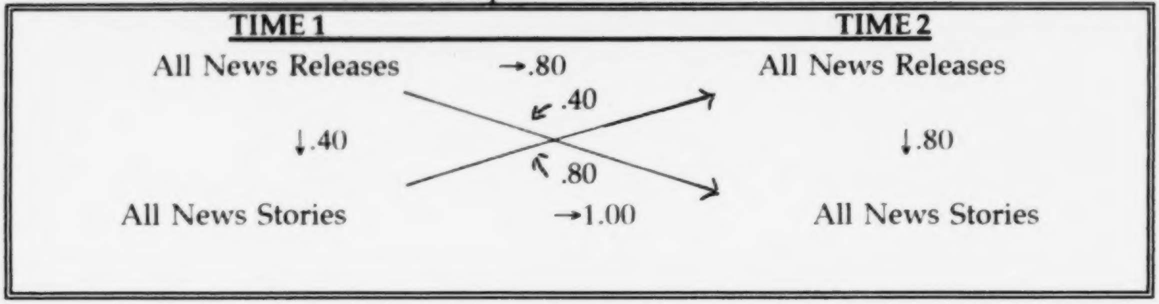
	Date of Release			
	Time 1		Time 2	
Tone	f	%	f	%
Negative	16	31	24	61
Positive	35	69	15	39
Total	51	100	39	100

Chi Square 8.48 (df=1) p .01

*** Other categories deleted due to small n.**

Using this data it was possible to correlate the tone given the campaign in candidate news releases with the tone in news stories across time. As shown in Figure 6, news releases had very little influence on the tone of subsequent news stories. On the other hand, news stories appeared to have substantial influence on the tone of subsequent news releases issued by the candidates.

FIGURE 6:
Time-Ordered Relationships (Spearman's Rho Correlations) in the Tone of All News Releases and News Stories about the Campaign in Three Texas Daily Newspapers
(Rozelle-Campbell Baseline Statistic = .39)



Discussion

We started this analysis with the premise that candidates used news releases to influence media agendas. Our analysis suggests the opposite may be the case. When it came to the political dance in the 1994 Texas gubernatorial election, the media appeared to take the lead in issues, focus and tone.

For the policy issue agenda, the data suggest that while issues emphasized in the candidates' news releases influenced subsequent newspaper coverage, the stronger influence was from newspapers to candidate news releases. This convergence may be a function of the timing of the study, late in the campaign when issues were established. It may also be a function of the ability of campaign operatives to give newspapers what they want.

Clearly, as it relates to issues, the candidates -- particularly the winner, George Bush -- and the newspapers were talking to each other. Instead of newspapers taking cues from candidates about which issues were important, candidates were particularly astute in honing their campaign issue agenda priorities to match that of newspapers, a potentially powerful media effect. While a candidate that is able to synchronize his or her agenda with that of the media undoubtedly gains an advantage, these findings alone probably do not fully explain the Bush victory in 1994.

In setting the tone of the election coverage, the candidates generally took their lead from newspapers, which were themselves in harmony. These findings suggest that newspaper election coverage often influences the tone of candidate messages. Findings relating to focus, however, were mixed. While the winning candidate took cues from the newspapers in focusing on various aspects of the campaign, the losing candidate did not.

This is important because media critics contend that journalists frame election coverage in an adversarial context. Media concentration on campaign strategy and tactics, they say, leads to voter ignorance of issues and contributes to the growing negative mood of the electorate. Patterson says

> For reporters, controversy is the real issue of campaign politics. The press deals with charges and counter charges, rarely digging into the details of the candidates' positions or the social conditions underlying policy problems. It is not simply that the press neglects issues in favor of the strategic game; issues, even when covered, are subordinated to the drama of the conflict generated between the opposing sides. In this sense, the press "depoliticizes" issues, treating them more as election ritual than as objects of serious debate. [26]

The storytelling imperative of journalists as well as media socialization, norms and practices all contribute to the tendency of reporters to focus on campaign politics at the expense of issues. Hofstetter says these structural biases of journalism explain much of the predilection of journalists for certain kinds of stories. [27] The campaign is, after all, in motion. By comparison, policy issues in the short duration of the campaign tend to be relatively static.

These data support critics who charge that the media are to blame for the tone and focus of campaign coverage. On the other hand, it should not be concluded that media professionals who run campaigns are blameless. They do, after all, seem to give the press what it wants.

Future Studies

Data are limited by the fact that only large-circulation dailies were included in the analyses. Subsequent studies should examine coverage of campaigns by newspapers in smaller communities, especially those which rely primarily on the wire services for election coverage.[28] All three newspapers maintain full-time bureaus in Austin, giving them direct daily access to campaign offices and to the candidates. This daily contact may have mitigated the influence of the news releases.

This research does not account for factors outside the scope of the study -- such as political advertising and television coverage of the campaigns -- that may have influenced the policy issue agendas or the tone and the focus of both election coverage and news releases. Future studies should concentrate on the other points at which the candidates disseminate their messages to further determine the relationship between candidate and media agendas.

Finally, the definitions used in this study to measure tone may be unduly restrictive. Further studies are needed to better define and measure tone in terms other than simply "negative" or "positive." If tone is better defined and consolidated with measures of focus, including attention given specific policy issues, it could lead to a better understanding of the elusive concept of framing. The best way to measure election framing may be through a combination or aggregation of the three elements tested in this study: tone, focus and issues.

Footnotes

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[1] Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: Random House (Vintage Books), 1979), p. 116.

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COMPUTER-ASSISTED NEWS REPORTING TOOLS:

A STUDY OF DAILY NEWSPAPER USE IN 1994

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A research paper presented to the Newspaper Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C., August 1995.

ABSTRACT

COMPUTER-ASSISTED NEWS REPORTING TOOLS:

A STUDY OF DAILY NEWSPAPER USE IN 1994

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The application of desktop and portable business computing hardware and software has grown rapidly in the past decade and has quickly crossed from the corporate and business world into the newsroom. How are journalists using those tools? What stories are being produced? This paper reports a national study of use of originally developed and public records-oriented computer databases and use of database tools in news reporting. The study analyzed use by U.S. daily newspapers in 1994. A total of 208 newspapers responded (40.5 percent) to the mail survey of newspaper managers. The study found that PCs are becoming more valuable for reporters and other newsgatherers for reasons that go well beyond writing. Movement should be expected from DOS toward graphical user interfaces and more original database development in addition to use of existing public databases. There will be fast growth in portable computing and training is likely to increase. Other findings relate to factors such as spending and various uses of CAR.

COMPUTER-ASSISTED NEWS REPORTING TOOLS:

A STUDY OF DAILY NEWSPAPER USE IN 1994

Personal computers have become the foundation of the most critical functions of the news media--- from writing, photography, and news research to production and distribution. Computers are the tools used to get work done in modern newsrooms. Perhaps one of the most seriously affected journalistic processes is news *reporting*. In the past decade, dozens of major changes have forever redefined how newsgathering takes place. As the middle of this decade passes, reporters and editors are becoming part of this new digital reporting age. Sophisticated new tools are now in the hands of journalists who once depended only on their senses and a pen and paper to gather news. It could be argued that the personal computer rivals the significance of the typewriter, telegraph, or the telephone in their impact on journalism and, especially, reporting. Numerous scholars have argued of the importance of high technology in studying communication and society and in studying journalism in the past three decades (McLuhan, 1964; Bagdikian, 1971; Smith, 1980, Pool, 1983; Dizard, 1985; Koch, 1991). Journalists are only now beginning to understand how valuable the computer has become in the daily lives of journalists and, it follows, those who use the products of journalists.

Reporters in the mid 1990s are using highly sophisticated means to gather information. Computer-based reporting might not be what some people think is real "in-the-streets" journalism. Using a computer to do something besides writing or editing is an alien concept to some "traditionalists." But a group of faculty members of the National

Institute for Advanced Reporting (NIAR) at Indiana University in Indianapolis believes computers have made the difference. "Journalism in the mid-1990s demands a level of sophistication which permits and encourages reporters to penetrate, interpret and present complex issues," they wrote (Brown, Ricchiardi, Fischer & Schneider, 1990, p. 2). "Computers are fast becoming the tools enterprising journalists require to gain access to vital information."

University of North Carolina Journalism Professor Philip Meyer saw it coming---more than twenty years earlier. While he might have been far ahead of his peers, he certainly got the attention of a few forward-thinking people. What Meyer called "precision journalism" became the label often applied to social science-oriented reporting, using the tools of sociologists, psychologists, and others who study human behavior. For many years, Meyer's computer journalism was a less-used term for survey research and polling applied to a news context. To Meyer's credit, he discussed numerous other social science tools in his benchmark book, *Precision Journalism,* and its subsequent editions (Meyer, 1973, 1979, 1991). But these more precise approaches were rarely used by reporters on news assignments in the 1970s and 1980s.

Diffusion of technological innovation is a widely studied process. Adoption of new ideas, objects, and practices takes time in any social system, even a small and focused professional system such as journalism. Rogers (1983) identifies five stages in the process that include (a) exposure to the innovation, (b) formation of attitudes toward the new idea, (c) a decision to adapt or reject the innovation, (d) implementation, and (e) confirmation or reinforcement. Newspaper journalists across the United States have found themselves at varying stages of this process over the past two or three years.

Slowly, some of the computer-based techniques have crossed into newsgathering. After all, as numerous communication scholars pointed out, reporters and social scientists are not all that different (Demers & Nichols, 1987; McCombs, Shaw, & Grey, 1976). Both study group and individual human behavior. Both gather information. Both analyze what they collect. Both disseminate information. For a decade after publication of Meyer's first edition of *Precision Journalism*, most reporters shied from the approach because it meant using mysterious and cumbersome mainframe computer systems for these stories. But a decade ago, affordable and more usable personal computers for office and home use arrived on the scene--- and the stage was set for one of the most significant technological shifts in the history of American news reporting: the desktop computerization of newsrooms and of news reporting.

As PCs improved over the past decade, it did not take long for the approaches advocated by Meyer and his small following to catch fire. The blaze grew slowly, but steadily. By the end of the 1980s, a variation on Meyer's original precision journalism theme, computer-assisted reporting, had evolved (Miller, 1988).

Computer-assisted reporting (CAR) is defined as the use of computers to gather information for a news presentation. To elaborate, it involves use of computers of all sizes, from mainframes to PCs to personal digital assistants (Garrison, 1995). First, it includes use of computers to search for information and retrieve it from other computers and their databases. This is referred to as *online research*. Second, the term includes use of computers to analyze original databases and databases from other sources for information for news stories. This is sometimes referred to as *database journalism*. The term "computer-assisted reporting" is also frequently used interchangeably with the term "computer-assisted journalism" (Garrison, 1995). This paper, however, focuses only on uses of computers in database-based reporting that do not require online tools.

Computer-assisted reporting has become the cutting-edge newsgathering tool of the 1990s. Online news research, reporting using online commercial services and the Internet, and news stories based on original database analysis by reporters are no longer ideas for future newsgathering. They are in use. There are a growing number of news organizations where CAR is a significant part of daily reporting and CAR is not being reserved just for special projects. For some news organizations, though, CAR is still perceived as a fancy topic for discussion at conferences or is a special projects tool used only by "nerdy" investigative reporters. This is gradually changing.

"I really believe this is journalism's future," Brant Houston (1994), managing director of the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting (NICAR), stated at a recent press association meeting. "I think that if we don't pay attention to how to get to information electronically, how to access it, how to analyze it, and how to disseminate it, we're going to be in a situation of going on the information superhighway in a horse and buggy. Two things are going to happen: One is that we're never going to get there on time and we won't have the news. The other is that we are just going to get run over. So I think we are really going to have start taking this a lot more seriously and integrating it into a routine of our newsrooms."

Steven Ross, another leading CAR proponent at Columbia University, feels journalists just got off to a slow start with computers. "The power of the computer can help reporters in many ways: word processing, data retrieval, data analysis, and information dissemination and storage," Ross (1992, p. 1) stated. "Yet except for word processing, journalists have been slow to take advantage of computer technology. And where computers have played a part in reporting, that part has usually been in the creation of massive 'investigative' stories, at major-market media outlets." Ross and other serious CAR advocates believe that CAR is an *approach* to reporting for all news organizations, large or small, with or without additional resources.

Slowly, numerous false impressions about CAR are being corrected as knowledge of the newsgathering innovation spreads. A majority of editors and publishers once believed that CAR was too expensive, that it can only be done well by large newsrooms, that it is only for long-term projects, that it is a "magic story fountain," and that it is extremely difficult to learn and do (Anon., 1993, September).

NICAR's Houston (1994), one of the nation's spokespersons for the movement to take computers beyond newsroom use as a writing tool, explained its significance for the future in journalism: "Computer-assisted reporting is a big tool, an application. It should be used on a daily basis, on a deadline basis, in addition to those great tree-eating projects we do and get prizes for. I think for a while, this appeared to be magic. There weren't that many people who knew how to do this. Elliot Jaspin, my predecessor, who was a pioneer in this field, would just blow people's minds by showing a computer tape and how data can be downloaded, how you can look at 100,000 records in a few seconds, and so forth.

It's a little less magical now. The software is much easier to deal with, the equipment is much more accessible. We're not dealing with a lot of equipment now that's hard to buy or too expensive to buy. The software is much, much friendlier. It's not the technical hurdle it was a few years ago."

Despite CAR's advantages, nothing replaces reporting news with all available tools. Tim Kelly (1993), executive editor of the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, emphasizes this when he discusses CAR. "We use a CAR approach on some of our stories, but you can never forget that type of reporting must be supplemented by other, more traditional types of reporting such as interviewing." Jim Leusner (1994), a veteran investigative reporter at the *Orlando Sentinel* caught the essence of this attitude: "Nothing can replace good, old-fashioned reporting, but CAR is an additional tool," he stated.

Journalists do not have to be Bob Greenes to use online research tools to check who owns a particular car, the maintenance record of a passenger jet, the size of a business, or patterns of crime in a community. Similarly, there is no need to be a database genius to analyze a city's proposed budget with a spreadsheet program. For beginners, CAR requires a moderately recent PC, a modem, and some rather unsophisticated software. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to discuss and answer the following research questions:

- *What are the levels of adoption of personal computer technology for news reporting?*
- *What types of personal computer hardware are in use?*
- *What types of personal computer software are in use?*

- *What is the direction of newspapers in computer-assisted reporting?*
- *What type of portable computing equipment is being used?*
- *What new subjects are being covered using computer tools?*

METHODS

A national mail survey of the uses of computer-assisted reporting was conducted beginning in December 1993 and extending through March 1994. The survey consisted of an initial mailing of 514 personalized cover letters, questionnaires, and stamped, self-addressed return envelopes to the nation's Sunday newspapers with circulations of 20,000 or more. One follow-up mailing was sent about one month after the initial mailing and individual contacts were made by telephone and E-mail to encourage response, following procedures recommended by Dillman's total design method for mail surveys (Dillman, 1978). The population was drawn from the most recent *Editor & Publisher* annual listings (Phillips, 1993).

While the unit of analysis is the newspaper as an institution, editors of the selected newspapers were asked either to complete the questionnaire themselves or to forward it to the person in charge of computer-assisted reporting. Identifications were requested to permit follow-up if necessary. In some cases, as many as two or three persons completed various portions of the questionnaire related to their newsroom specializations. A total of 208 responses was received, a rate of 40.5 percent. A representative of one California newspaper in the sample returned a questionnaire, stating the publication had ceased publication a few months earlier. Furthermore, it is possible, perhaps likely, that many of the newspapers that did not respond have not begun any CAR at the time of the survey.

The questionnaire was developed from discussions and interviews during the Investigative Reporters and Editors conference on computer-assisted reporting at Raleigh, N.C., in 1993 as part of a larger research project focusing on computers and reporting (Garrison, 1995). The data-gathering instrument consisted of four sets of questions, including institutional information, computer-assisted reporting approaches, online news research, and field reporting use of computers. The portion of the instrument that focused upon online news research and reported in this paper contained twenty-nine variables. Respondent journalists were also encouraged to include any additional comments on the subject. In some cases, follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone. Additionally, in-person interviews were conducted at the Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel, Lexington Herald-Leader, The Miami Herald, The Washington Post,* and *USA Today*. Additional telephone interviews were conducted with journalists at the *Orlando Sentinel, St. Petersburg Times*, and *Knoxville News-Sentinel*. Data were processed using Microsoft FoxPro for Windows relational database management system, Ver. 2.6 (Anon., 1994) and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, SPSS for Windows, Ver. 6.0 (Norusis, 1993).

FINDINGS

Of the 208 newspapers that responded, 56.3 percent were under 75,000 circulation and 34.1 percent were between 75,000 and 300,000 circulation. The mean circulation of all respondent newspapers was 121,361. A total of 36.1 percent of the respondent newspapers are in the South and 28.4 percent are in the Midwest. The largest number of newspapers from an individual state were from California (n=17 or 8.2 percent). Other states with at least eleven responding newspapers included Florida, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas. More specific findings:

- *What are the levels of adoption of personal computer technology for news reporting?*

Use of personal computers as reporting tools is clearly spreading. In spring 1994, two-thirds (66.3 percent) of responding newspapers, as shown in Table 1, use computers in some manner for some type of reporting. Just less than half (47.1 percent) of the newspapers had created CAR desks or had plans to create a CAR desk or project team. Of those planning, 43.0 percent planned to start a desk within a year. It should be noted that for simplicity of the discussion, only percentages are reported in the text. Frequencies are reported with both absolute percentages and adjusted percentages (that are recomputed without missing data) in the tables.

Training has been one barrier to use of CAR. Since CAR requires computer literacy, some sort of on-the-job training has become an important issue. While entry-level journalists may be learning it in some colleges, most journalists must learn CAR while at work. At this stage, most industry CAR training is occurring at out-of-the-newsroom training programs such as those offered by the Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) and NICAR, both at the University of Missouri. The alternative, in-house training, is coming along slowly Only 34 6 percent of newspapers responded reported in-house CAR training of any type

- *What types of personal computer hardware are in use?*

Newspapers often move to online services as a first-step into CAR. This requires minimal tools and some level of budget for online expenses. In 1994, about three-fifths of daily newspapers used online services (Garrison, 1995). Newspapers are generally, like other corporate computer systems users, moving away from mainframe systems. As shown in Table 2, IBM systems were the most used (15.5 percent) among newsrooms using mainframe systems for CAR. While more reported using SII (19.0), these systems are generally used only for word processing in newsrooms and not advanced applications. Minicomputers, the baby-sibling to mainframes, are gaining some favor in a few (8.7 percent) newsrooms as CAR tools

A total of 30.3 percent of the responding newspapers did not report use of personal computers for CAR. Of those using PCs, the Intel 80486 processor (44.1 percent) is the most common "heart" of CAR. The older Intel 80386 chip is also popular (14.5 percent). The newer Pentium (80586) systems had not gained wide use, nor had the late 1994 controversy surrounding the Pentium's accuracy occurred, at the time the study was conducted. Macintosh personal computers have a small (12.4 percent), but noticeable, following

Another form of data access--- perhaps second only to modems as the most popular peripheral to all PC systems--- is CD-ROM readers. In this study, 35.6 percent of the newspapers reported using CD-ROM readers and 3.8 percent used more than one CD-ROM reader in the newsroom for work on stories.

- *What types of personal computer software are in use?*

Among editors and reporters involved in CAR, there is on-going debate about the best and most appropriate software products. Since few journalists write their own software, the solution is to adapt off-the-shelf business software to newsroom needs. As Table 3 reveals, DOS and Windows are the leading operating platforms (21.6 percent of all responses and 45.0 percent of those reporting some platform). Numerous newsrooms (14.4 percent of all responses and 30.0 percent of those replying to the question) are still only DOS based in their CAR work.

Briefly, some additional software findings detailed in Table 3:

- XyWrite (23.1 percent) remains the most-used word processor, but WordPerfect and Word are becoming more common as newsrooms move to PC-based and graphical user interface systems. A total of 42.8 percent did not report any word processor, however.

- Excel is the dominant spreadsheet (16.8 percent), but many newsrooms use 1-2-3 (16.3 percent) and Quattro Pro (13.0 percent).

- Database management systems, or relational database software, are very popular tools for database journalism. A total of 48.6 percent of responding newspapers did not use any relational database software, however. Among the users, Paradox is the preferred (38.3 percent) package, but FoxPro (23.4 percent) is also widely used in their DOS and Windows versions.

- Most newspapers (83.2 percent reported none or did not answer) are not yet using computer mapping products. However, of those using geographic information systems (GIS) software, Atlas GIS (29.1 percent) and MapInfo (18.2 percent) are the most widely used.

- Similarly, not many newspapers (just 14.4 percent) use statistical software. Among those that reported using a statistical package, SPSS (28.8 percent) is the most popular. SAS (9.6 percent) and others are used by only a few newspapers.

- Few journalists (only 7.2 percent) use personal information managers--- the software version of day planners that organize appointments, addresses, and other information. While this tool makes sense for reporters to use, it has not found its way into newsrooms yet.

- A similarly low proportion (9.1 percent) of news organizations is using programming software to produce their own programs. Of those in use, Visual Basic and Basic are most often in demand.

- *What is the direction of newspapers in computer-assisted reporting?*

Table 4 shows the most immediate hardware and software dreams of CAR editors and reporters in 1994. While 38.9 percent did not offer a wish list, the largest number (48.8 percent) listed "other" replies such as training, acquisition of hardware, upgrading hardware, or additional workstations. The most frequent single category (16.5 percent) was connected to databases in some manner such as acquiring a database management software system or learning how to use one already in house. Another 12.6 percent of replies related to acquiring and learning how to use computer-based mapping systems.

- *What types of portable computing equipment are being used?*

Remote reporting has forced many journalists in the past decade to learn how to use personal computers. According to data reported in Table 5, 64.4 percent of the newspapers reported using portable PCs of some kind in field reporting. However, only 13.0 percent reported using those portable computers for something other than writing stories, for purposes such as database analysis or online connections to databases. Software on portable PCs varies, of course, but many newspapers depend on pre-installed software rather than set up their own systems. A total of 41.3 percent did not respond to the question about software configurations for portables, but of those replying, 40.2 percent used only a combination of a communications program and a word processor, 21.3 percent used the built-in set up, and 14.8 percent used only word processors on their portables.

Interestingly, it appears that newspaper journalism--- a field supposedly oriented to sophisticated communications technology--- is not using as much of it in reporting as might be expected. Only 22.0 percent report using cellular telephones, 16.7 percent used cellular telephones and modems (but not necessarily at the same time), 15.2 percent used cellular telephones and two-way radios (but not necessarily at the same time). A total of 10.6 percent used only beepers. Another 30.3 percent used a combination of beepers, cellular telephones, and radios.

- *What new subjects are being covered using computer tools?*

The types of stories being produced from these computing tools are widely ranging. From Pulitzer Prize winners in Akron in 1994 ("A Question of Color" analysis of race relations) and Miami in 1993 (Hurricane Andrew storm damage analysis) to daily lifestyle features nationwide, the topics cover just about all aspects of public life. Since 1989, at least one Pulitzer Prize has been awarded to a project using CAR in some form (Garrison, 1995).

What is most popular topic? Some of those reported in questionnaires included census data, political action committee contributors, election data, crime statistics such as homicides, drunken driving, teachers with crime records, city budgets, environmental pollution data, home mortgage loan data, restaurant inspections, commercial airline maintenance records, public highway bridge inspection data, travel expense records, dangerous local streets and major highways, public school performance databases, registered voter voting records analyzed in combination with death records, and public servant long distance telephone records. Some sports and business topics are beginning to appear as well. Popular light-hearted CAR story ideas include analysis of pet license databases. But there were many more subjects reported.

CONCLUSIONS

The data reported in this study suggest something quite obvious: Computers are becoming more and more valuable for reporters and other newsgatherers for reasons that go well beyond writing. There are numerous noticeable patterns. As far as computing goes, more movement should be expected away from DOS toward Windows, OS/2, or other graphical user interface (GUI) products. These programs are often easier to use and will be more inviting for beginners, especially. There will be more original database development in addition to use of existing public databases that is already common. Some newspapers participating in the study, notably the *Raleigh News & Observer*, lead the way in this area.

There will be more rapid growth in portable computing also. This may be the real future of computer-based journalism. While journalists are at the mercy of the computer industry in many ways, they can take advantage of down-sizing to make their work easier in the years ahead. Because of the size and power of these systems in the mid 1990s, they will begin to replace desktop systems. This will free reporters and editors to take their work anywhere, any time, any story. Training is likely to increase as well, if activities by professional organizations in 1993 and 1994 are an indication. Furthermore, it is apparent that several significant trends are emerging:

1. About one-third of the responding news organizations are not spending any money on computers to be used as reporting tools or for online research or analysis of databases and, amazingly, have no immediate plans to do so.

2. Most editors, two-thirds, report they are thinking about ways to use or begin use of CAR tools. Of those, a large minority is moving slowly, waiting until the next generation of newsroom PCs are installed to replace existing dedicated front-end systems. A number of these newsrooms are starting by default--- that is, their employees use their

own personal tools to do online research or import or build public records databases for stories whether the news organization itself supports the effort or not. To make matters more compelling, these reporters or low-level editors are often doing the work on their own time.

3. There are journalists that are moving quickly into CAR. These tend to be reporters and editors at larger newspapers--- organizations with sufficient money to spend on hardware, software, and even training. A small number of newspapers have spent tens of thousands of dollars for fast starts, but then the reporters/editors explain that their supervisors expect results far too soon and that those results are supposed to be "blockbuster" proportion, front-page, award-winning projects. A few responding reporters explained that editors do not understand the process of database building and analysis or online research and they expect too much too soon.

4. A small number of the responding news organizations--- and perhaps even more if the 59-plus percent of non-responding newspapers is considered--- have not yet moved toward adoption of CAR tools. Newspapers need to realize their PCs can be used for much more than writing, editing, pagination, and graphics. The one-third of the respondents not using CAR do not even use off-the-shelf business applications for maximum benefit in reporting.

5. The two-thirds of the responding newspapers that have begun both online news research and database analysis had done so with the same sort of enthusiasm and support. However, a few news organizations are doing only online research and not attempting any database-oriented CAR.

6. The larger dailies are the leaders of the field in the public records database analysis and online research movements. The most sophisticated CAR projects are being conducted in Cleveland, Dallas, Raleigh, Waterbury, Miami, San Jose, St. Louis, Long Island, St. Petersburg, Washington, and other cities. But these are not necessarily the newspapers that won Pulitzers with CAR over the past six years.

7. While it has not been quantified by this study, interviews revealed that most CAR began with a computer "geek" who also happened to be a reporter or editor. This is consistent with Rogers' (1983) description of innovation diffusion and the pattern seems to set itself in most newsrooms the same way: One or two persons are more computer literate than everyone else and these persons are tapped as CAR director or newsroom systems czar, or both. There is no set pattern from where the "CAR czar" originates. Some are editors, beat reporters, investigative or special project reporters, and some were found to be business editors or reporters. But the one thing that is for certain: few, if any, are managing editors or higher level editors and managers. Rogers (1983) also characterizes those who adapt. While he describes participants as innovators, early adapters, early majority, late majority, and laggards, use of CAR in the U.S. in mid 1994 is primarily by innovators and early adapters. The process, data from this study seem to show, is that journalists and CAR are moving toward the early majority classification. The process still has a distance to cover before diffusion of CAR has run its course.

It is clear that new and continuing research about CAR, particularly its database building and analysis aspects, is necessary. Additional research will permit greater depth and more focus on individual aspects of CAR, such as differences in institutional and individual uses that are not readily distinguished here. Further, new research needs to probe into behavioral reasons for differences in responses that have been identified. Annual analysis of newspapers' uses of CAR tools will indicate the amount of change that is occurring. It may also suggest manners in which CAR impacts upon how communities are covered and what readers are learning from CAR-based news stories. This particular introductory study, representing a one-shot first-time design, has inherent shortcomings in its approach. But it is the first stage in what will be an annual review of CAR. Subsequent reports will offer deeper and, perhaps, more meaningful analyses.

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TABLE 1: COMPUTER-ASSISTED REPORTING IN NEWSROOMS

A. USE OF CAR FOR NEWSGATHERING:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Yes	138	66.3	67.3
No	67	32.2	32.7
Missing	3	1.4	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

B. EXISTENCE OF A CAR DESK OR PLANS FOR A CAR DESK:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Yes	98	47.1	48.5
No	104	50.0	51.5
Missing	6	2.9	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

C. PLANS TO START CAR DESK IN THE NEXT YEAR:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Yes	43	20.7	43.0
No	38	18.3	38.0
Don't know	19	9.1	19.0
Missing	108	51.9	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

D. CAR TRAINING PROGRAM:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Yes	62	29.8	34.6
No	117	56.3	65.4
Missing	29	13.9	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

TABLE 2: HARDWARE USED IN COMPUTER-ASSISTED REPORTING

A. TYPE OF MAIN FRAME SYSTEM:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
IBM	9	4.3	15.5
Vax	4	1.9	6.9
SII	11	5.3	19.0
Other system reported	24	11.5	41.4
None reported	10	4.8	17.2
Missing	150	72.1	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

B. TYPE OF MINICOMPUTERS IN USE:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Sun-Unix	3	1.4	16.7
VMS	1	0.5	5.6
Other	8	3.8	44.4
Other	6	2.9	33.3
Missing	190	91.3	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

C. TYPE OF NEWEST PC PROCESSOR:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
586 Pentium	2	1.0	1.4
486	64	30.8	44.1
386	21	10.1	14.5
286	3	1.4	2.1
8088	1	0.5	0.7
Macintosh	18	8.7	12.4
Other	31	14.9	21.4
None reported	5	2.4	3.4
Missing	63	30.3	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

D. NEWSPAPERS USING CD-ROM FOR NEWS REPORTING:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Yes, more than one	8	3.8	7.8
Yes, one reported	74	35.6	71.8
No	21	10.1	20.4
Missing	105	50.5	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

TABLE 3: SOFTWARE USED IN COMPUTER-ASSISTED REPORTING

A. PRIMARY OPERATING SYSTEM PLATFORM:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
DOS	30	14.4	30.0
DOS and Windows	45	21.6	45.0
OS/2	5	2.4	5.0
Mac Operating System	8	3.8	8.0
Other	10	4.8	10.0
None reported	2	1.0	2.0
Missing	108	51.9	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

B. PRIMARY WORD PROCESSOR IN USE:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
XyWrite	48	23.1	40.3
Microsoft Word	12	5.8	10.1
Word Perfect	15	7.2	12.6
Lotus AmiPro	5	2.4	4.2
Other	36	17.3	30.3
None reported	3	1.4	2.5
Missing	89	42.8	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

C. PRIMARY SPREADSHEET IN USE:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Lotus 1-2-3	34	16.3	30.1
Microsoft Excel	35	16.8	31.0
Novell Quattro Pro	27	13.0	23.9
Other reply	12	5.8	10.6
None used currently	5	2.4	4.4
Missing	95	45.7	Missing
	------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

D. PRIMARY RELATIONAL DATABASE SOFTWARE IN USE:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Microsoft FoxPro	25	12.0	23.4
Borland Paradox	41	19.7	38.3
Microsoft Access	2	1.0	1.9
Borland dBase	10	4.8	9.3
XDB	6	2.9	5.6
Other reported	16	7.7	15.0
None reported	7	3.4	6.5
Missing	101	48.6	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

E. PRIMARY DATABASE MAPPING SOFTWARE IN USE:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Atlas GIS	6	7.7	29.1
MapInfo	10	4.8	18.2
Other	9	4.3	16.4
None reported	20	9.6	36.4
Missing	153	73.6	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

F. PRIMARY STATISTICAL PACKAGES IN USE:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
SAS	5	2.4	9.6
SPSS	15	7.2	28.8
Other	10	4.8	19.2
None reported	22	10.6	42.3
Missing	156	75.0	Missing
	------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

G. PRIMARY PERSONAL INFORMATION MANAGERS IN USE:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Lotus Organizer	1	0.5	2.8
askSam	4	1.9	11.1
Other	10	4.8	27.8
None reported	21	10.1	58.3
Missing	172	82.7	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

H. PRIMARY PROGRAMMING SOFTWARE IN USE:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Basic	2	1.0	5.7
Visual Basic	4	1.9	11.4
Other programming tools	13	6.3	37.1
None reported	16	7.7	45.7
Missing	173	83.2	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

TABLE 4: NEXT STEPS TO TAKE

CAR RESOURCE CATEGORIES TO ACQUIRE FOR REPORTING:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Spreadsheet-related	3	1.4	2.4
Database-related	21	10.1	16.5
Mapping-related	16	7.7	12.6
Statistics-related	3	1.4	2.4
CD-ROM drive-related	10	4.8	7.9
9-track reader-related	10	4.8	7.9
Scanner-related	2	1.0	1.6
Other response	62	29.8	48.8
Missing	81	38.9	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

TABLE 5: COMPUTER-ASSISTED REPORTING IN THE FIELD

A. USE OF LAPTOPS IN REPORTING:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Yes	134	64.4	88.2
No	18	8.7	11.8
Missing	56	26.9	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

B. USE OF COMPUTERS IN REMOTE REPORTING:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Yes	27	13.0	14.1
No	165	79.3	85.9
Missing	16	7.7	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

C. USE OF SOFTWARE IN PORTABLE PC-BASED REPORTING:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Word processor	18	8.7	14.8
Word proc./commun. package	49	23.6	40.2
Word proc./spreadsheet	2	1.0	1.6
Built-in system	26	12.5	21.3
Basics and advanced	11	5.3	9.0
Other	5	2.4	4.1
None	11	5.3	9.0
Missing	86	41.3	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

D. OTHER REMOTE REPORTING TOOLS IN USE:

	Frequency	*Percent*	*Adjusted Percent*
Cellular phone/radio	20	9.6	15.2
Cellular phone/modem	22	10.6	16.7
Modem and/or fax	29	13.9	22.0
Beeper	14	6.7	10.6
Beeper/cellular phone/radio	40	19.2	30.3
None reported	7	3.4	5.3
Missing	76	36.5	Missing
	-------	-------	-------
Total	208	100.0	100.0

The Bias of Visual Appeal in the Selection of General Excellence Winners in Newspaper Contests

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The Newspaper Division
Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication
Annual Convention
Washington, DC
August 9-12, 1995

RUNNING HEAD: "Visual Appeal"

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The Bias of Visual Appeal in the Selection of General Excellence Winners in Newspaper Contests

ABSTRACT

Using archival data, this study analyzes the relationship between general excellence winners and winners of 31 award sub-categories in the National Newspaper Association's "Better Newspaper Contest" from 1983-1994. Results support the hypothesis that among winners of awards for general excellence, winners in sub-categories involving visual appeal (typography, photography, and color) are more likely to be represented than winners in non-aesthetic sub-categories (e.g., pure writing and reporting). Implications for the newspaper industry are assessed.

The Bias of Visual Appeal in the Selection of General Excellence Winners in Newspaper Contests

In their latest five-year update of trends in front-page design in American newspapers, Pasternack and Utt observed, "Newspapers are committed today more than ever before to an attractive appearance. The design revolution which began in the late 1970s has filtered down--in varying degrees--to every daily newspaper in the United States." Their 1993 study found that of 97 newspapers surveyed, 68% had been redesigned in the past five years. Innovation on page one included increased use of color, infographics, photos, news digests/indices, and modular format. This study suggests that editors equate strong visual appeal with improved journalistic quality.[1]

In an earlier study the author of the present study found many of these same innovations spread beyond just page one; he surmised that much of the change was part of the so-called "McPaper Revolution" triggered by reader-friendly *USA Today*. The author found, too, that much of the "*USA Today*-style innovation" emulated by hometown newspapers emphasized content heavy with entertainment values--e.g., more sports and celebrity coverage--and formats that make content more accessible and easier to digest (e.g., shorter sentences, paragraphs, and stories; and more stories told with the aid of graphics and illustrations).[2] Observing similar form and content in contemporary American newspapers, Logan argued that *USA Today*-style innovation clashes with traditional professional values by devoting too much space to trivia and fluff and not enough to news of substance; as a result, news reporting suffers by de-emphasis on investigative, in-depth, explanatory journalism and concern for public service and the public's right to know.[3]

The present study looks at the contemporary emphasis of news form over substance by examining the connection between newspaper emphasis on visual appeal and journalistic practices that are rewarded in newspaper excellence contests. The literature related to journalism contests suggests there are certain practices and constraints in the judging process itself that may bias evaluation of general excellence in favor of papers that are strong in visual appeal--papers that simply "look good." Given that journalism awards and contests provide models of excellence and incentive to emulate those models, the implication for the industry is that other criteria of excellence (e.g., traditional qualities of good writing and informative reporting) may be improperly subordinated because of the bias of visual appeal.

The present study specifically aims to evaluate how prize journalism values visual appeal as a criterion of journalistic excellence, compared with criteria related more directly with the substance of news--news reporting and news writing. Results may help determine the balance of form versus substance in prize journalism, and indicate whether the design trends noted above are propelled, at least in part, by the promise of reward in journalism contests.

Literature Review

In the past 25 years newspaper researchers have focused considerable attention on the proliferation of journalistic contests and editors' and reporters' seeming preoccupation with awards.[4] In 1972 *Editor & Publisher* devoted six pages to list 87 journalism awards in its contest directory; a little more than two decades later the trade publication used 33 pages to list more than 300 national, international and regional journalism competitions--leaving out many state contests.[5]

Several studies have found that most newspapers encourage prize seeking.[6] Research suggests they do they do so for a variety of reasons. Prizes recognize and reward journalists and newspapers for outstanding work and provide models and incentive for good journalism.[7] Awards also heighten individual and organizational prestige,[8] improve morale and recruiting,[9] and sometimes serve as proof of excellence.[10]

Surveys of editors and reporters show they perceive several problems with prize seeking.[11] These include: (a) unethical behavior rooted in the coveting of awards (e.g., the Janet Cooke episode involving the *Washington Post*[12], (b) the taint of commercial sponsorship, (c) doubtful motives of journalists seeking prizes for career advancement and of newspapers interested seeking awards primarily for immediate prestige, and (d) poor quality of judging.[13] Coulson found that a little more than a third of managing editors he surveyed worried, too, that prize winning can create a false standard of excellence.

Numerous anecdotal accounts have addressed these problems, as well as the politics and strategies of prize seeking.[14]

A few systematic studies have focused on structural variables and content characteristics that distinguish winning newspapers from non-winners. Looking at competition as a structural variable, White and Andsager found that as competition from another newspaper increases, a newspaper is more likely to have a disproportionate probability of winning in a number of categories. However, their study, based on analysis of Pulitzer Prize winners, found that this conclusion did not hold true in the local news category. The authors concluded that competition has much less effect on the quality of journalism than it does on the variety of quality.[15]

Turning to content characteristics, DeRiemer examined stories by winners and non-winners in an education writing contest and found that, compared with non-winners, award winners published longer education news stories and more stories with state and national focus.[16] Hansen reported that, compared with non-winners, Pulitzer Prize-winning or -nominated enterprise news stories used proportionately more diverse sources and fewer simple journalistic interviews.[17]

In a broader context, Laakaniemi, Green and Jankowski identified consistent winners in the National Newspaper Association's annual "Better Newspaper Contest," then asked editors to explain what, in their opinion, sets their newspaper apart from consistent non-winners. Editors most frequently mentioned: (a) finding and managing personnel, (b) good long-range planning (e.g., listening to readers, knowing paper's role, leadership through editorials, setting high standards), and (c) attention to mechanics (e.g. graphics, layout, photos, editing and writing).[18]

In his plea for further research, Coulson posed the question, "Does prize journalism heighten performance or focus more attention on the importance of the reward than on the activity being rewarded?"[19] This is an important question not only because it underscores the possibility that prizes have become ends in themselves, but also because it reminds us that practices that are rewarded in the prize process have implications for journalistic practice throughout the industry. Mindful of those implications, one is prompted to ask: What sort of performance do prizes reward and encourage?

Unfortunately, there are few, if any, systematic studies that shed light on this question. What we do know about journalism contests, and the actual process by which entries are judged, comes almost entirely from materials handed out by contest organizers, news reports about contests results, and published anecdotal observations by contest participants, often in the form of post-contest rumination by competition judges.

Using the latter as a source for understanding the process by which judges evaluate entries and select winners, it is apparent that constraints in the judging process bias selection of winners in various ways. The major constraints are: (a) time allowed for judging and (b) space available for display of entries.

A number of judges have complained that contest organizers have not added enough judges to keep pace with the increasing number of contest entries. Judging a regional writing competition, one judge observed, "What I had anticipated as a long, intensive session of reading the best in Chicago investigative reporting turned into a mad scramble of passing the entries around to the other four judges in a matter of a few hours." She asked: "Are all journalism awards given for the highlights and nothing else?"[20] A Pulitzer juror made a similar point: "I suspect that whenever [judges] have to gather from distances in a central meeting place you may read the lead and two paragraphs. If you're not grabbed at the beginning you may lose the whole works."[21] Another judge, a Pulitzer juror, wrote: "I wondered whether the judges had done their job very well, or whether in fact they could, when asked to evaluate scores of entries in just a few days."[22] Still another Pulitzer juror observed, "I don't know whether, of those considered, the best [entry] won. I don't know because in nine hours, five fellow judges and I were expected to consider a million words, in 134 separate entries, and come up with five finalists." This judge concluded that the system "allows for some pretty good journalism to get lost in the `chaff.'"[23] Griffith asserted that because there are too many entries for Pulitzer jurors to evaluate thoroughly, the real purpose of jurors is to serve merely as "preliminary screeners" for the Pulitzer Advisory Board, which makes final determination of winners.[24]

Inadequate space provided for judges compounds the problem. One Pulitzer juror wrote, "What we needed were long rows of tables on which to spread [entries] for contemplative comparison; but what we had was one medium-sized horseshoe table shoved into one corner of the room. We scattered scrapbooks on the floor, stacked them on the window sill and the piano bench, and tussled with them on our laps."[25] Another judge similarly complained of "monstrous clutter" of entries.[26]

Some judges complain that because of the constraints of time and space, too often judging the quality of writing comes last. Instead, they assert, judges are focused on entry elements that are most easily detected. McCormally said his team of judges focused mostly on initiative, resourcefulness, research--not quality of writing.[27] Blankenburg and Allen reported that several managing editors said that too often "whim and whimsy rule the judges' decision," and often the deciding factor is an entry's visual or aesthetic appeal. They noted that at least one editor "urged that entries be standardized to reduce eye-appeal in contests based on writing."[28] To standardize stories, text of all entries would be set in the same size and style of type and divorced from peripheral graphic context.

Some judges suspect that many newspapers are savvy to the power of aesthetics and hope to sway judges with slick packaging of contest entries.[29] One Pulitzer juror wrote, "I was appalled at the amount of effort that went into the packaging and display of some of the entries. One weighed at least 20 pounds. It struck me as marketing."[30] McNichol observed: "Like grammar-school students who tie their book reports together with a pretty piece of colored yarn, the publicity people at many newspapers hope that aesthetics count for something. Hot among PR embellishments is the larger-than-life submission, in which the stories are enlarged and mounted on high-gloss Permaboard."[31]

The overall impression derived from these observations is that because of constraints within the judging process, the best-looking entries may have an advantage over entries low in eye appeal. This notion is intuitively sound, concordant with common sense, when one considers that the visual impact of physical appearance plays a critical role in determining success or failure in many aspects of life.

Numerous psychological studies have found that physical attractiveness of individuals can create an aura, or "halo," of attractiveness about a person that may cause others to evaluate their performance in a positive light.[32] According to Cash, an individual's personal appearance, or looks, predisposes others to treat the individual favorably in the workplace, the courts, school, and life in general.[33] Adler asserted that one's intelligence "is not the most important attribute in determining who gets the goodies in life anymore. It is looks. . . . In virtually any conceivable set of circumstances, research shows that you're better off being good looking."[34]

The present study attempts to identify those attributes of newspaper excellence that are most strongly associated with general excellence in newspaper contests. The study aims to identify the aspects of newspaper performance that are most highly valued in the contest process, and to flesh out implications that newspaper emulation of those performances may have for the industry at large.

The review of the literature suggests that, compared with contest entries lacking strong visual appeal, entries with strong visual appeal are more likely to catch the attention of judges, in their rush to judgment. This leads to the study's formal hypothesis: Among winners of awards for general (overall) excellence in journalism contests, winners in sub-categories involving aesthetics (typography, photography, and color) are more likely to be represented than winners in non-aesthetic sub-categories (e.g., pure writing and reporting).

Methodology

This study used archival data to examine winning entries in the National Newspaper Association's "Better Newspaper Contest" over a 12-year span, 1983-94.[35] The contest presented four awards each year in the category "general excellence": first, second, and third place, and honorable mention. Awards were presented in five circulation groups--daily newspapers and weeklies with 10,000 or more circulation, 6,000-9,999, 3,000-5,999, and less than 3,000. The number of newspapers winning at least one honorable mention in these groups during the dozen years were as follows: dailies, 38 papers; weeklies 10,000 or more, 40; weeklies 6,000-9,999, 28; weeklies 3,000-5,999, 48; weeklies under 3,000, 49. The study assigned the following values to general excellence award winners in each contest year as follows: 4 points, first place; 3 points, second place; 2 points, third place; 1 point, honorable mention. Thus, over the 12-year span, it was possible theoretically for a newspaper to earn at minimum 1 point for a single honorable mention and a maximum of 48 (4 points for each first place in each of the 12 years).

The study assigned the general excellence category the role of criterion variable to be correlated with the 31 award sub-categories used in this study. Table 1 lists the sub-categories. Winners in each sub-category in each year were awarded 1-4 points using the same method described above. Because of their highly specialized nature, a few additional sub-categories were excluded (e.g., coverage of energy, coverage of literacy, etc.).

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

The NNA contest did not use the same general excellence circulation groups for all 31 sub-categories used in this study. Thus, in the feature story sub-category, for example, first-, second-, and third-place awards and honorable mentions were presented in three daily circulation groups instead of one (25,000 or more, 10,000-24,999, and under 10,000) and in five weekly groups instead of four (splitting the under 3,000 group in two: 1,500-2,999 and less than 1,500). To standardize the scoring, the study formulated multipliers to give equal value or weight to papers in the same five circulation groups used for general excellence category. Thus, again using the feature story sub-category as an example, points earned by newspapers in the three daily circulation groups were divided by three (multiplied by .33) and points earned by weeklies with less than 3,000 circulation were divided in half (multiplied by .5). To use another example, the NAA presented awards in the color sub-category to papers in only two circulation groups, dailies and weeklies. To place award values on a par with the general excellence circulation groups, each weekly's points were multiplied by four. Using multipliers this way, each newspaper in each of the 31 sub-categories theoretically could earn zero to 48 points over the 12 years, same as with the general excellence category and its circulation groups except that zero value was added as a possibility.

In most award categories only one first-, second-, and third-place awards were presented, but usually there was more than one honorable mention. In rare cases a newspaper tied with another newspaper for an award or won two awards in the same category in the same year; occasionally no award was given (for example, there might be first-, second-, and third-place awards, but no honorable mention). No attempt was made in this study to account for these anomalies since they would not inject any systematic bias into the data.

In a few instances, the NAA did not use a sub-category in all 12 years. In such cases, the study again used a multiplier to give added weight to points earned by winners in the years in which the sub-category was used. For example, in 1983 and 1984 the contest did not have a sub-category for writing/reporting and so points earned by all papers in this category in the other 10 years were multiplied by 1.2. In this way, again, each newspaper theoretically could earn 0 to 48 points over the 12 years. This sort of a weighting method was used only for sub-categories that were missing for only 1-2 years; if a sub-category was missing more than two out of the 12 years, it was not used in the study.

To test the study's hypothesis, the study employed simple correlation and multiple regression analysis to correlate the criterion variable (points earned by newspapers in the contest's general excellence category) with 31 independent variables (points earned by newspapers in the contest's sub-categories). The analysis used the SPSSx statistical package.

Results

To facilitate the analysis, the author used subjective judgment to identify five variables (award sub-categories) strongly associated with visual appeal (typography, photo essay, feature photo, use of photography, and use of color) and five variables or sub-categories strongly associated with pure writing and reporting (editorial, investigative reporting, feature story, spot news, and writing/reporting). These select predictor variable groups were labeled "visual appeal" and "pure writing/reporting." Categories deemed neutral with respect to visual appeal and pure writing/reporting were set aside and not used for support or lack of support for the hypothesis. Similarly, visual and writing/reporting categories related to sports were not identified as key predicator variables because of the confounding nature of sports categories, i.e., sports's function more as entertainment than news.

To test the study's hypothesis that, compared with winners in pure writing/reporting categories, winners in visual appeal categories were more likely to win points for general excellence, first the mean scores of all 200 newspapers in the 31 subcategories were correlated with mean scores in the general excellence category. Pearson *r* (product-moment correlation) describes the magnitude of the relationship for each predictor variable with the criterion variable (general excellence), but, of course, ignores any interrelationships or redundancies among the predictors. Next, the absolute mean values for all newspapers were assessed to identify those sub-categories in which newspapers scored the greatest number of points. Third, to take into account interrelationships among predictor variables, weighted linear combinations were used in multiple regression analysis to determine the best predictors of the dependent variable, i.e., the variables that account for as much variance in the dependent variable as possible. Finally, each variable in the select predictor groups (visual appeal group and pure writing/reporting group) were aggregated and an index was produced in which mean scores across of all five items were computed. That procedure produced two indices ("visual appeal" and "pure writing/reporting"); each index was tested for reliability and multiple regression analysis was used to help explain which set of variables better accounts for, or explains, variance in the criterion variable.

Table 1 shows that 24 variables correlated significantly with general excellence. The strongest correlation was with the feature story award, a pure writing sub-category, followed closely by two visual appeal sub-categories, use of photos and typography. Fourth strongest correlation was with the writing/reporting sub-category. The other key visual appeal sub-categories (feature photo, photo essay, and use of color) ranked number 6, 11, and 17, respectively. The other pure writing/ reporting categories (spot news, investigative reporting, and editorial page) ranked 9, 15, and 22, respectively. Thus, the mean rank (in terms of the magnitude of bivariate relationships with general excellence) was 7.8 for the visual appeal categories and 10.2 for the pure writing/reporting categories. Comparison of the mean ranks provides support for the hypothesis that the magnitude of the bivariate relationships with general excellence will be stronger with visual appeal categories compared with pure writing/reporting categories.

Turning to the mean values across all newspapers in the 10 select predictor categories, Table 1 shows that all papers earned the most points as follows: typography, 2.8 points; use of photos, 2.3; writing/reporting, 2.0; photo essay, 1.9; use of color, 1.8; feature photo, 1.7; feature story and spot news, both 1.5; editorial, 1.2; and investigative reporting, 1.1. Summing these values, 10.5 points were earned by the visual appeal group and 7.3 was earned by the pure writing/reporting group. Again, this lends support for the hypothesis since papers winning general excellence awards scored greater absolute points in visual appeals categories compared with pure writing categories.

To develop a formula that accounts for, or explains, as much variance in the dependent variable as possible, a multiple regression analysis was used, pruning the multiple regression equation until all coefficients were statistically significant to at least the marginal level of $p<.082$ level. Table 1 shows that this analysis produced 11 independent variables. The r^2 indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is accounted for by the 11 predictor variables. This means that 56% of the variance in the dependent variable was accounted for by these 11 variables.

Support for the hypothesis is found by comparing beta weights (Table 1). The beta weights indicate clearly that the best predictor of general excellence was typography, followed by feature story, and use of photographs. Next, though considerably weaker as predictors, were writing/reporting, sports column, coverage of arts, spots news, and special issue. Agricultural coverage, spot photo, and advertising idea were negatively related and generally accounted for weaker amount of variance.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

Table 2 shows that when each variable in the select predictor groups were aggregated into an index in which mean scores across the five items were computed, beta weights from multiple regression analysis (forced entry) indicate further support for the hypothesis by showing that the visual appeal index was a better predictor of general excellence than the pure writing/reporting index. Both indices showed strong reliability, using *alpha* for reliability measure; comparison of reliability measures of the two indices shows somewhat stronger reliability for the visual appeal index compared to the pure writing/ reporting index. A step-wise multiple regression found that it made no difference which variable (index) went into the equation first.

The study also employed a principal components factor analysis using varimax rotation (9 iterations), but this procedure was not helpful in the interpretation of results. Ten factors with an eigenvalue exceeding 1.0 were identified; these accounted for 68.7% of total variance. However, only two factors seemed to coalesce into unambiguous groupings. One was what might be called "graphic appeal"; it accounted for 6.7% of total variance and was comprised of photo essay, use of photographs, cartoon, and feature picture. The other factor might be called "community leadership"; it accounted for 6.1% of total variance and was comprised of environmental coverage, community service, editorial, and the Herrick editorial.

Summary and Conclusion

This study found strong support for the hypothesis that among winners of awards for general, overall excellence in journalism contests, winners in award sub-categories involving visual appeal (subcategories of typography, photo essay, feature photo, use of photography, and use of color) are more likely to be represented than winners in sub-categories involving pure writing/reporting (editorial, investigative reporting, feature story, spot news, and writing/reporting). Support for the hypothesis was found in all four measures of data analysis.

First, using simple correlation, the magnitude of the bivariate relationships between general excellence awards and the various sub-category awards generally were stronger with the visual appeal sub-categories compared with the pure writing sub-categories. Second, mean values of award points earned in the 10 select predictor sub-categories (five visual appeal and five in pure writing/reporting) show that newspapers winning general excellence awards scored greater absolute points in visual appeal sub-categories compared with pure writing/reporting sub-categories. Third, using multiple regression analysis, comparison of beta weights indicate that the best predictor of general excellence was typography, followed by feature story, and use of photographs. Next, though considerably weaker as a predictor, was writing/reporting. Fourth, when each variable in the select predictor groups were aggregated into an index in which mean scores across all five items were computed, multiple regression analysis showed that the visual appeal index was a better predictor of general excellence than the pure writing/reporting index.

These results have potent implications for the newspaper industry, given that certain practices are rewarded in the prize process and that journalism contests provide models of excellence and incentive to emulate those models. The author concludes from this study that the value of a newspaper's performance in areas involving news substance (the gathering, reporting, and writing of news) is subordinated in the prize process to a newspaper's visual appeal--the form in which the news is presented.

This conclusion raises the possibility that the design revolution of the past 20 years may be related to the process of journalism contests. That is, the newspaper industry's growing emphasis on design and aesthetics may be encouraged by rewards in the prize process. That, by itself, is not an alarming development; after all, as noted at the outset, editors do equate strong visual appeal with improved journalistic quality.

What is disturbing, however, is that in the prize process traditional standards involving excellence in news writing and reporting have become secondary to criteria involving newspapers' visual appeal. In a 1987 survey in which 257 editors of newspapers of all sizes (including weeklies) responded, the author of the present study found that editors ranked "strong local news coverage" number one in importance as a standard of newspaper excellence. 95.7% of the editors rated this standard as "essential" to newspaper quality. Ranked next in importance were accuracy, good writing, and visual appeal, in that order. 98.4% of the editors rated accuracy as an essential standard and 98.4% rated good writing as essential. However, less than half the editors (44.7%) rated visual appeal as an essential standard. The survey defined "visual appeal" as "effective, attractive presentation of news through use of visual tools such as typography, photography, graphics, color, layout, and design."[36]

Given the results of that study, the present study suggests that the journalism contest process wrongly places the greatest value on a newspaper's visual appeal. If editors valued criteria in the contest process the same as they valued newspaper excellence criteria in the abstract, in contests they would place greater value on strong local news coverage and good writing. The author of the present study suggests that contest emphasis on visual appeal as a criterion of newspaper excellence is the result of the powerful bias of visual appeal. That bias is probably explained, at least in part, by the time and space constraints in the judging process. It may be, too, that a newspaper's visual appeal creates an aura, or "halo," of attractiveness that affects contest judges' evaluation of a newspaper's overall performance.

Several studies cited at the outset raised concern that news reporting might suffer because of widespread adoption of *USA Today*-style innovation. Several authors charged that this style of innovation puts too much emphasis on entertainment values and not enough on informational values, i.e., investigative, in-depth, explanatory journalism motivated by concern for public service and the public's right to know. Results of the present study substantiate these concerns by showing that among the five pure writing/reporting sub-categories, the feature story sub-category--comprised of many stories that are light in substance and high in entertainment value--is much more strongly associated with general excellence winners than the sub-categories of investigative reporting and editorial.

This study offers several clues how newspaper contests might be improved, so that criteria of judging better reflect editors' evaluation of the importance of various standards of newspaper excellence. For one, contests should enlarge the number of judges, and give the judges more time and space to do their judging. The literature makes it clear that lack of enough time and space is a common complain of contest judges, causing some to question the quality of the judging itself. The present study suggests that the constraints of time and space inadvertently bias judging in favor of entries strongest in visual appeal. With more time and space, judges could do more than catch the highlights of an entry (reading just the headline and the first paragraph or two before rushing on to the next entry).

Another suggestion is to eliminate or decontextualize visual elements of entries in writing and reporting sub-categories. Thus, for example, text of entries in pure writing/reporting sub-categories would be converted to standardized type size and style and all peripheral design elements would be eliminated. Also, rules would be adopted to standardize all packaging and mounting of entries, especially in pure writing/reporting sub-categories.

Future research might survey contest judges to explore in greater depth their concerns about the judging process and to elicit their suggestions on ways the process might be improved. Another potentially fruitful area of inquiry would involve comparison of perennial winners of general excellence awards with non-winners, and assessment of the role of structural variables in explaining why some newspapers are more likely than others to win general excellence awards consistently. These variables would include newspaper ownership (group versus individual owner) and competition (monopoly versus competitive situation). The researcher also might look at longevity of management/ownership (how long the editor or publisher been associated with the newspaper) and education and professional affiliations of editor and/or publisher. This sort of analysis might be combined with a qualitative analysis in which the researcher conducts in-depth interviews with personnel at award-winning newspapers and non-winning newspaper, so that we get a better understanding of newspaper philosophy and attributes that are closely associated with journalistic excellence.

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2. George Albert Gladney, "The McPaper Revolution: *USA Today*-Style Innovation at Large U.S. Dailies," *Newspaper Research Journal* 13 (Winter/Spring 1992): 54-71; George Albert Gladney, "*USA Today*, Its Imitators and Its Critics: Do Newsrooms Staffs Face an Ethical Dilemma?" *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 8:1 (1993): 17-36. For a full discussion of contemporary newspaper innovation as a reflection of market-driven values, see: Doug Underwood, *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Howard Kurtz, *Media Circus: The Trouble With America's Newspapers* (New York: Times Books, 1993); James D. Squires, *Read All About It! The Corporate Takeover of America's Newspapers* (New York, Times Books, 1993).

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4. William B. Blankenburg and Richard L. Allen, "The Journalism Contest Thicket: Is It Time for Some Guidelines?" *APME News* 76, September 1974, 1, 7-9; Bob Ingle, "We're Drowning in a Sea of Media Awards," *Masthead*, Fall/Winter 1982, 17-18; David C. Coulson, "Editors' Attitudes and Behavior Toward Journalism Awards," *Journalism Quarterly* 66 (Spring 1989): 143-147; Tom McNichol, "Proliferating Prizes: Too Much of a Good Thing?" *Washington Journalism Review*, July 1986, 35-37.

5. See *Editor & Publisher* awards special sections, 23 December 1972, 11-16, and 31 December 1994, 10J-43J.

6. Blankenburg and Allen, "The Journalism Contest"; Coulson, "Editors' Attitudes."

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12. William Green, "Janet's World: The Story of a Child Who Never Existed--How and Why It Came To Be Published," *Washington Post*, 19 April 1981, 1.

13. Blankenburg and Allen, "The Journalism Contest"; Coulson, "Editors' Attitudes."

14. Laurence G. O'Donnell, "The Reflections of a Pulitzer Prize Juror," *Wall Street Journal*, 13 April 1982, 34; Mary Galligan, "Contested," *Quill*, May 1981, 34.

15. H. Allen White and Julie L. Andsager, "Winning Newspaper Pulitzer Prizes: The (Possible) Advantage of Being a Competitive Paper," *Journalism Quarterly* 67 (Winter 1990): 912-919.

16. Cynthia DeRiemer, "Education Coverage in Award-Winning and Non-Award-Winning Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 65 (Spring 1988): 171-177.

17. Kathleen A. Hansen, "Information Richness and Newspaper Pulitzer Prizes," *Journalism Quarterly* 67 (Winter 1990): 930-935.

18. Ray Laakaniemi, William Green and Laurence Jankowski, "Winning Weeklies: Common Traits of Award Winners," *Newspaper Research Journal* (Winter/Spring 1992): 138-144.

19. Coulson, "Editors' Attitudes."

20. Galligan, "Contested."

21. Melvin Mencher, quoted in Galligan, "Contested."

22. O'Donnell, "The Reflections."

23. John McCormally, "Who Cares About the Pulitzer Prize?" *More*, May 1972, 9.

24. Thomas Griffith, "The Pulitzer Prizes: Giving and Taking Away," *Time*, 15 May 1978, 87.

25. McCormally, "Who Cares," 9.

26. McNichol, "Proliferating," 37.

27. McCormally, "Who Cares," 10.

28. Blankenburg and Allen, "The Journalism Contest," 9.

29. McCormally, "Who Cares"; O'Donnell, "The Reflections"; McNichol, "Proliferating."

30. O'Donnell, "The Reflections."

31. McNichol, "Proliferating," 37.

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33. "20/20 Takes a Close-Up Look at Looks," *Tampa Tribune*, 4 November 1994, III-4.

34. Jerry Adler, "Beyond the Bell Curve," *Newsweek*, 7 November 1994, 56.

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36. George Albert Gladney, "Newspaper Excellence: How Editors of Small and Large Papers Judge Quality," *Newspaper Research Journal* 11 (Spring 1990): 58-72.

TABLE 1

Simple Correlation and Multiple Regression of General Excellence on Predictor Variables

Independent Variable	Simple Correlation[a]	Mean Value[b]	SD	Beta[c]	Sig T
Feature story	.54***	1.5	.19	.219	.0003
Use of photos	.52***	2.3	.41	.212	.0015
Typography	.50***	2.8	.48	.276	.0000
Writing/reporting	.48***	2.0	.30	.175	.0028
Special issue	.47***	1.4	.23	.113	.0706
Feature photo	.44***	1.7	.28		
Sports feature	.41***	2.1	.46		
Sports page	.39***	2.3	.47		
Spot news	.39***	1.5	.25	.113	.0589
Sports column	.34***	1.3	.32	.136	.0389
Photo essay	.33***	1.9	.31		
Spot photo	.32***	1.6	.31	-.125	.0766
Editorial page	.29***	2.3	.39		
Coverage of arts	.29***	1.7	.57	.118	.0830
Investigative reporting	.22**	1.1	.20		
Sports photo	.20**	1.9	.46		
Use of color	.20**	1.8	.36		
Humor column	.19**	0.9	.12		
Serious column	.17*	1.2	.23		
Family page	.17*	2.3	.37		
Newspaper promotion	.16*	1.5	.38		
Editorial	.15*	1.2	.25		
Community service	.15*	1.1	.22		
Agricultural coverage	.15*	0.9	.31	-.154	.0064
Environmental coverage	.14	1.3	.37		
Business/economic coverage	.13	1.7	.41		
Herrick editorial	.09	1.4	.41		
Freedom of information	-.06	0.2	.06		
Cartoon	.05	1.7	.48		
Ad idea	.01	1.2	.26	-.090	.0818
Notice	.00	0.7	.40		

*--$p<.05$
**--$p<.01$
***--$p<.001$

[a] Pearson product-moment correlation (r); 2-tailed; N=200.
[b] Theoretical range = 0-48.
[c] R^2 = .563 (F = 22.04; df = 11, 188; p = <.0001). Beta = standardized regression coefficient.

TABLE 2

Multiple Regression Coefficients of Key Predictor Indices on General Excellence

Predictor Indices	Alpha	Mean[a]	SD	Beta[b]	Sig T
Visual Appeal[c]	.71	2.1	.26	.432	.0000
Writing-Reporting[d]	.64	1.5	.15	.364	.0000

[a] Theoretical range 0-48.

[b] R^2 = 452 (F = 81.35; df = 2, 197; p = <.0001).

[c] Component variables: typography, photo essay, feature photo, use of photographs, and color.

[d] Component variables: editorial, investigative reporting, feature story, spots news, writing/reporting.

WHERE AMERICANS REALLY GET THEIR NEWS

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Washington, D.C.
August 1995

Where Americans Really Get Their News

Every evening just before 7 we hear that "More Americans get their news from ABC News than from any other source." This is the current version of the promotional campaign the television industry began 36 years ago. The Television Information Office commissioned Roper Research Associates to ask Americans where they "got most of your news about what's going on in the world."[1]

Newspapers came out ahead of television, 57 percent to 51 percent the first time(1959), but by 1963 television had edged ahead of newspapers.[2] The Television Information Office then proclaimed loudly that television was the main source for news and kept on saying it more loudly as television's margin rose to 24 percent)65-41) by 1985.[3]

Well, it wasn't that simple then and it isn't that simple now. Mass communication researchers doubted the finding and explored the issue in several ways. Carter and Greenberg found in a 1963 study that the question wording favored television.[4] Lemert found in 1970 that if you replaced "world" with "Eugene and Lane County" (Oregon) newspapers came out far ahead of television.[5] Stempel had a similar finding the same year in three Ohio cities.[6]

Robinson asked people in 1975 and 1976 which news media they used "yesterday," and found that newspapers led television. Cross-tabulating use with age, he found that newspapers led for every age group.[7] Stevenson and White found that the percentage of people saying they got most of their new from television exceeded the percentage that reported watching any early evening network newscast in a two-week period.[8] Culbertson and Stempel further confirmed in a 1983 study that there is a difference between what media people say they use and what they actually use.[9]

Reagan and Ducey found that newspapers outdistanced television as a source for specific kinds of state news in a 1981 survey in Michigan.[10] Stempel had a similar finding for specific kinds of local news in a 1990 national study.[11]

ABC's current claim is less ambitious. What ABC is saying is simply that their early evening newscast anchored by Peter Jennings has a larger audience that either CBS's or NBC's early evening newscast. It is about 11 or 12 million. That is a lot more than the 1.9 million of the **Wall Street Journal** or the 1.5 million of **USA Today.** On the other hand, it is a lot less than the 59.8 million total circulation of daily newspapers reported by the Newspaper Association of America.[12] The combined audience for the three network early evening newscasts falls far short of daily newspaper circulation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The ABC claim obscures rather than enlightens. This suggests that it is time to take a closer look at the actual use of newspapers and television news, as Robinson did nearly two decades ago. We did so in a study by the E. W. Scripps School of Journalism and the Scripps Howard News Service in the summer of 1994. Our research questions were:

1) What is the extent of use of the daily newspaper, local television newscasts and network television newscasts.

2) What is the relationship between age and use of daily newspapers, local television newscasts and network television newscasts?

3) What is the relationship between income and use of daily newspapers, local television newscasts and network television newscasts.

METHOD

We interviewed 1,000 randomly selected respondents between July 15 and August 3, 1994. Our sample was drawn by computer from a computerized national telephone directory. We randomized selection of respondents in the household reached by asking for the person who would next celebrate a birthday.

Interviewing was done from Ohio University by upper class and graduate students who were recruited and trained in interviewing by one of the authors.

Respondents were asked how many days in the past week they had read a daily newspaper, watched an early evening local TV newscast, watched a early evening network newscast and watched a late evening local newscast. We also asked a standard set of demographic questions including age and income in order to address Research Questions 2 and 3.

RESULTS

More people read a newspaper on a given day than watch early evening local newscasts, early evening network newscasts or late evening local newscasts. Table 1 shows how many days a week respondents use each of these media. That table shows that 42 percent read a daily newspaper every day, which is far ahead of percentage watching any of the three kinds of television newscasts every day of the week.

Table 2 reports the average daily audience for each of the media as computed from the responses to how many days they watched. Newspapers have a substantial lead over network television newscasts, but only as slight lead over the early evening local newscast.

Table 3 shows the average daily audience crosstabulated with age. We see here a similar result to that reported by Robinson in that for all four media, use tends to increase with age. The increase is small for the late evening newscast, but for newspapers, early evening local newscasts and early evening network newscasts, use is far greater for people over 55 than for people under 35.

Table 4 cross tabulates use with income, with a somewhat different result. Newspaper reading varies directly with income, with those with an income of more than $60,000 far more likely to read a newspaper than those with less than $25,000 income. For early evening local and network newscasts, the audience is actually smaller among those with more than $40,000 income than for those with less than $40,000 income. For the early evening network newscast, the audience is in fact largest for those with less than $10,000 income. For the late local newscast, the pattern is slightly different, with viewing being greatest among those with incomes between $25,000 and $60,000. Clearly, the advertiser who wants to reach the upscale audience should consider the newspaper the primary medium for doing so.

Thus far, we have compared reading a newspaper with viewing specific television newscasts. There are two other approaches here, which are shown in Table 5. On the one hand we can compare the number reading a newspaper with the number watching any of the three newscasts. It turns out that 42.4 percent watched at least one of the three newscasts all seven days. That is essentially the same percentage that read a newspaper all seven days. If we look at those who watched at lest one newscast four days or more, that turns out to be 77.1 percent, which is substantially more than the 57.4 percent that read a daily newspaper four days or more.

From the data in Table 5, we can estimate that 72.0 percent watched at least one of the three newscasts on the average day, compared to the 61.2 percent that read a daily newspaper on the average day.

There is, however, reason to apply a more rigorous test--namely how many people watched both a local and a national newscast. After all, watching only a local newscast is hardly the equivalent of reading a newspaper. Likewise, watching only a national newscast is hardly the equivalent of reading a newspaper. The newspaper contains both local and national news. Furthermore a typical newscast has about as many words as one page of a newspaper. Watching one newscast would be at best the equivalent of reading the front page and nothing more.

Table 5 shows the figures for those watching both a local and a national newscasts. In other words, these are the people who watched a national newscast and either the early evening or the late evening local newscast. Less than half as many watch both types of newscast as read a newspaper all seven days. The daily average that we can project from Table 5 would be 47.4 percent watching both newscasts. In other words on any given day, less than half the people are getting news from both local and national newscasts.

Table 6 shows correlations between days using these four media. The correlations are all statistically significant beyond the .01 level, but most are small. The only one of any real size is between the early evening local newscast and the early evening network newscast, which is .619. The correlations between number of days reading a daily newspaper and watching any of the three kinds of newscast range from .102 with the late evening local newscast to .182 with the early evening network newscast. Thus the explained variance ranges between 1.0 percent and 3.3 percent.

Table 7 shows correlations between three demographic variables and media use--income, education and age. For newspapers, the correlations with all three demographic variables are significant. For television newscasts, the only significant correlation is a negative .097 between education and watching the early evening newscasts. But perhaps the most important point in that table is that for the three types of television newscasts, the correlation between days watched and income is slightly negative.

CONCLUSIONS

The ABC slogan, for all its cleverness, simply masks the fact that network newscasts lag both newspaper and local newscasts in audience size. The claim that "More people get news from ABC News than any other source" is true only in the limited sense that the ABC audience is larger than that of any individual newspaper. This study makes it clear that newspapers are more than competitive with television news. There are more people who read newspapers every day than watch early evening network newscast, early evening local newscasts or late evening local newscasts. There are in fact more people who read a daily newspaper every day than watch any of those three kinds of newscasts every day.

The average daily audience for newspapers is slightly larger than that for early evening local newscasts and a good deal larger than that for early evening network newscasts and late evening local newscasts.

This study also confirms the earlier finding of Robinson that television news viewing like newspaper reading increases with age. It is not a matter of newspaper reading being lower for people under 35 because they are watching television news. It is important to confirm this finding because at the time Robinson did his study, most people over 35 had grown up without television. Now, more than two decades later, that distinction is no longer true. The person who is 55 today was 8 years old in 1948 when television came of age. And the person who is between 35 and 45 was not alive before television came on the scene. But at the time of Robinson's study it was widely believed that the low readership of newspapers by persons under 35 simply meant they watched telvision news instead. Perhaps they never would become newspaper readers. Our data indicate rather clearly that that assumption was wrong. Those people who were between 20 and 35 20 years ago are reading newspapers more than they were then.

This study also points out that the higher a person's income the more likely he or she is to be a newspaper reader. For the people with more than $60,000 income, the gap between newspapers and television news is enormous.

The newspaper thus may still be the main source of news for the American public, especially if we consider volume of news. One should remember that the Roper question merel;y asked what your main source of news was. It did not ascertain how much news you were getting. If you accept our premise thatat the minimum a person would have to watch both a local newscast and a network newscast to get as much news as her or she would get from a newspaper, then the newspaper is clearly the main soure.

At the same time, the newspaper is clearly the preferred medium for advertisers, especially local advertisers because its margin over television increases markedly as you move to higher income people. Table 4 provides no basis for any advertiser picking television over newspapers.

We cannot help feeling that it is time for the newspaper industry to shout it from the housetops. Whether your interest is news or advertising, the newspaper is No. 1.

NOTES

[1] The Roper Organization, **An Extended View of Public Attitudes Toward Television and Other Mass Media, 1959-1971**(New York: Television Office, 1971), p.2.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Burns Roper, **Public Attitudes Toward Television and Other Media in a Time of Change**(New York:Roper Organization, 1985), p.3.

[4] Richard F. Carter and Bradley S. Greenberg, "Newspapers or Television: Which Do You Believe?" **Journalism Quarterly**, 42:29-34(Spring 1965).

[5] James B. Lemert, "News Media Competition Under Conditions Favorable to Newspapers," **Journalism Quarterly**, 47:272-280(Summer 1980).

[6] Guido H. Stempel III, "Effects on Performance of a Cross-Media Monopoly." **Journalism Monographs No. 29**, June 1973.

[7] John B. Robinson, "Daily News Habits of the American Public," **ANPA News Research Report No. 15**, Sept. 22, 1978.

[8] Robert L. Stevenson and Kathryn P. White, "The Cumulative Audience of Network Television News. **Journalism Quarterly**, 57:477-481(Autumn 1980).

[9] Hugh M. Culbertson and Guido H. Stempel III, "How Media Use and Reliance Affect Knowledge Level," **Communication Research**, 13:579-602(October 1986).

[10] Joey Reagan and Richard V. Ducey, "Effects of News Measure on Selection of State Government News Sources," **Journalism Quarterly**, 60:211-217(Summer 1983).

[11] Guido H. Stempel III, "Where People Really Get Most of Their News," **Newspaper Research Journal**, Fall 1991, pp. 2-9.

[12] Newspaper Association of America, **Facts About Newspapers**(Reston, Virginia: The Newspaper Center 1994), p.3.

TABLE 1: Number of Days Read Newspaper and Watched Newscasts in Past Week, in Percent

Number of Days

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Read Daily Newspaper	17.8	9.7	7.5	7.6	4.6	5.8	5.0	42.0
Watched Early Local TV Newscast	16.2	5.4	7.9	9.4	11.6	11.8	6.1	31.8
Watched Early Evening Network TV Newscast	20.8	7.4	10.5	12.8	9.7	10.1	4.9	24.0
Watched Late Evening Local TV Newscast	32.7	5.6	11.9	8.6	6.4	11.2	4.2	19.3

N=1,000

TABLE 2: Average Daily Audience for Daily Newspapers and Newscasts, in Percent

Daily Newspaper	61.2
Early Evening Local TV Newscast	60.5
Early Evening Network TV Newscast	52.6
Late Evening Local TV Newscast	42.8%

TABLE 3: Average Daily Audience for Various Age Groups, in Percent

Age Medium	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Over 65
Daily Newspaper	45.4	46.6	54.9	64.1	75.7	75.1
Early Evening Local TV Newscast	45.9	48.1	53.9	60.1	72.7	76.5
Early Evening Network TV Newscast	38.0	38.5	46.8	51.7	71.7	65.5
Late Evening Local TV Newscast	34.0	38.8	43.5	41.2	49.4	48.8

N=1,000

TABLE 4: Average Daily Audience for Various Income Groups, in Percent

Income Medium	Below 10,000	10,000 to 25,000	25,000 to 40,000	40,000 to 60,000	More Than 60,000
Daily Newspaper	50.9	56.2	59.4	60.1	75.9
Early Evening Local TV Newscast	57.5	61.2	62.2	56.1	53.4
Early Evening Network TV Newscast	52.3	47.8	50.7	49.9	45.5
Late Evening Local TV Newscast	41.6	41.3	43.3	43.3	39.7

N=1,000

TABLE 5: Use of Daily Newspaper and Any of the Early Evening Newscasts, in Percent

	Never	1-3 Days	4-6 Days	All 7 Days
Read Daily Newspaper	17.8	24.8	15.4	42.0
Watched Any One of the Early Evening Local TV Newscast or the Early Evening Network TV Newscast or the Late Eening Local Newscast	6.5	16.2	34.9	42.4
Watched Either Local TV Newscast and the Early Evening Network TV Newscast	23.1	30.8	26.2	19.9

N=1,000

X^2 for read daily newspaper and watched both local and network newscast = 146.2, 2 d.f., $p<.001$

TABLE 6: Corelations Between Days Read Daily Newspapers and Watched Television Newscasts

	Early Local	Early Network	Late Local	Newspaper
Early Evening Local Newscast				
Early Evening Network Newscast	.619			
Late Evening Local Newscast	.260	.140		
Daily Newspaper	.152	.182	.102	

All coefficients significant at .001 level.
N=1,000

TABLE 7: Corelations Between Media Use and Three Demographic Variables

	Income	Education	Age
Early Evening Local Newscast	-.050	-.096*	.251**
Early EVening Network Newscast	-.012	.019	.264**
Late Evening Local Newscast	-.019	.041	.113*
Daily Newspaper	.162**	.215**	.264**

*p < .01 **p < .001
N=1,000

Ideological Manipulation Via Newspaper Accounts of Political Conflict: A Cross-National Comparative News Analysis of the 1991 Moscow Coup

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Paper presented to the Newspaper Division at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D. C., August 9-12, 1995.

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Abstract

This study is a comparative content analysis to detect the ideological bias in newspaper coverage of the 1991 Moscow coup across three countries--the United States, Taiwan and China. By quantitatively analyzing the news space, main actor and different terminologies to name this event and event leaders within the hegemony theoretical framework, this study provides evidence that each country's news coverage was biased in politically motivated directions to maintain the dominant political-economic system.

Ideological Manipulation Via Newspaper Accounts of Political Conflict: A Cross-National Comparative News Analysis of the 1991 Moscow Coup

Some structural and behavioral factors affecting the content of news have been widely discussed in the newsroom and gatekeeper studies, as exemplified by the works of David White (1950), Warren Breed (1955), Leon Sigal (1973), Edward Epstein (1973), Gaye Tuchman (1978), and Herbert Gans (1979). Different factors both on the individual level and the organizational level have been identified to affect the news production. However, one weakness of these studies is found to produce static descriptions of factors influencing the media rather than identifying the underlying process or investigating news production within a larger social context.

Numerous perspectives have been offered to integrate the news process and the messages produced by it within a more general conception of social organization. One concept which has been increasingly receiving a good deal of scholarly attention is the broader conception of "hegemony" which assumes that the media content is a function of ideological mobilization and a tool of the status quo. The media content is framed within the ideology of the powerful to mobilize public support.

Although journalists try hard to be objective, in practice, they are still constrained to explain the facts from an ideological acceptable perspective (Parenti, 1986, p.35). That is the news frame through which events are presented and as a result of which they come to be given one dominant or primary meaning rather than another. For example, Hall (1982) argues that particular accounts may be ideological, "not because of the manifest bias or distortions of their surface contents, but because they were transformations based on a limited ideological matrix" (p. 72).

This ideological bias in treating news can be more easily detected in international political news. The study of the bias in international news coverage within the United States has yielded a rich body of literature (for example, Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Ahern, 1984; Chang, 1988; Hopple, 1982; Mazharul Haque, 1983; McNelly& Izcarey, 1986; Peterson, 1981; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1985; Stevenson & Cole, 1984; Graber, 1989; Gans, 1979; Lent, 1977; Van Dijk, 1984 & 1988a). However, their findings, not based on a multi-cultural studies, are limited to explain the news bias in the United States. Also, they only present a surface bias in foreign news content instead of addressing the theoretical issue of explaining the deep structure that generates the patterns of the coverage.

Thus, this study, in an attempt to go beyond the description of international news and to place it in the broader theoretical framework of "hegemony," examines how United States', Taiwan's, and China's newspapers covered a foreign event--Moscow Coup which occurred in August 1991. By comparing the news coverage of the Moscow coup, this study demonstrates how this foreign event was treated, was defined, and in what context it was explained by the media in these three countries. The scope of this event allows us to look at the ideological linkage between the media and the status quo in these three different political contexts. It is expected that the coverage in a country reflects a world view consistent with its values or policies of the status quo.

Relevant Literature: Objectivity vs. Hegemony

Bias and Objectivity

Objectivity has been described as "the emblem" and "keystone" of American journalism (Hackett, 1984). Although journalists claim to exclude personal values in reporting, Gans (1979) proposes that neither they nor anyone can proceed without values. He argues that some "enduring values" are "unconsciously" built into news judgment (p.182). These enduring values include ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order and national leadership, which are rarely explicit and can be found in many different types of news stories over a long period of time.

Similar to Gans' argument, McQuail (1977, p.197) suggests several possible manifestations of bias: explicit argument and compilation of evidence favoring one view; a tendentious use of facts and comments, without any explicit statement of preference; the use of language which colors an otherwise factual report and conveys an implicit but clear value judgement, and the omission of points favoring one side, in an otherwise straight news report.

Numerous content analyses have sought to evaluate the objectivity of news coverage and the challenges to the claims of media objectivity are broad-ranging. Several studies (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Tuchman, 1978; Epstein, 1973) argue that the news media unavoidably structure their representation of social and political events in ways which are not pregiven in the events themselves. Far from constituting a detached observer, the media help actively to construct the world. Similarly, Weaver and Wilhoit (1983) cited MacBride Report that "the act of selecting certain news items for publication, while rejecting others, produces in the minds of the audience a picture of the world that may well be incomplete or distorted" (p. 134).

In addition, Morley (1976) argues that "labelling implies evaluation" (p. 246-7). In his words, "evaluations are already implicit in the concepts, the language in terms of which one observes and records" (p. 246-7). Hall (1982) also argues that such connotations are not fixed and pregiven, as in a dictionary, but rather are a product of political struggle over signification.

News Framing

Implicit in the process of encoding of news is selection of codes which assign meanings to events, placing events in a referential context which attribute to them. Davis (1990) notes that the meaning that is imposed is limited by and relative to the context in which meaning is generated. There are significantly different ways in which events--especially troubling events which breach our normal or threaten the status quo in some way--can be coded (Hall, 1977).

Hall (1977, p.343) observes that the selection of codes, those which are the "preferred" codes in the different domains, and which appear to embody the "natural" explanations which most members of the society would accept, casts these problematic events, consensually, somewhere within the "repertoire" of the dominant ideologies.

Likewise, Gitlin (1980) defines media frames as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (p. 7).

Hackett (1984) mentions that framing is not necessarily a conscious process during journalistic practices. He suggests that it may be "the result of the unconscious absorption of assumptions about the social world in which the news must be embedded in order to be intelligible to its intended audience."

Similarly, Hall (1982, p.72) argues that particular narratives may be ideological, not because of the manifest bias or distortions of their surface contents, but because they are generated out of "a limited ideological matrix"--a set of rules and concepts for making sense of the world. Hackett (1984) points out that this matrix constitutes a "deep structure" which is activated without journalists' consciousness.

Carey (1989) proposes a ritual view of communication which conceives communication as a process through which a shared culture is created, modified, and transformed. It is directed not toward "the extension of messages in space," but "the maintenance of society in time" and "the representation of shared beliefs" (p. 18 & 43).

The ritual view of communication considers newspaper reading less as sending or gaining information and more as a portrayal and reinforcement of a particular view of the world. Carey (1989) emphasizes that "what is arrayed before the reader is not pure information but a portrayal of the contending forces in the world" (p. 20). Newspapers, says Carey, "do not operate as a source of effects or functions but as dramatically satisfying, which is not to say pleasing, presentations of what the world at root is" (p. 20). That's why Carey claims that newspapers are "a presentation of reality that gives life an overall form, order, and tone" (p.21).

For example, the Cold War perspective once organized virtually all foreign affairs coverage into a coherent ideological picture supportive of American world hegemony. Hallin (1987, p.17) points out that the Cold War ideology is produced through a primarily "unconscious" process, employed by journalists not so much to make a political point as to "package" the presentation of news in terms they assume the audience will find interesting and easy to understand.

The process of encoding an event within the preferred meanings is "unconscious," even for the encoders. Hall (1977) explains that "it is masked, frequently, by the intervention of the professional ideologies--those practical-technical routinizations of practice which structure the everyday practices of encoding, and which, in any case, distances journalists effectively from the ideological content of the material they are handling and the ideological inflexions of the codes he is employing" (p. 344). Hence, though events will not be systematically encoded in a single way, journalists tend, systematically, to draw on a very limited ideological or explanatory repertoire, and that repertoire tends to cast meanings within the sphere of the dominant ideology.

To explore the underlying ideologies that generate and frame patterns of newspaper coverage, this study uses "hegemony" theory to analyze the coverage of Moscow coup.

Hegemony as a Process of Ideological Mobilization

"Hegemony," as Hallin defines (1987), is "power sustained by ideology" (p. 11). Hall (1977) also agrees that the hegemony works through "ideology." It is not a "given and permanent state of affairs, but has to be actively won and secured" (p. 333).

Basically, the notion of media hegemony assumes that media content is a function of ideological positions and a tool of the status quo. The hegemony theory predicts that media content is influenced by the ideology of the powerful or the elite to win the consent of the population. The powerful groups control the massages of the media in search of an enduring basis for legitimate authority (Gitlin, 1980; McQuail, 1987; Shoemaker, 1987; Gramsci, 1971).

Gramsci, who was the first to specify the concept, suggests that "hegemony is a ruling class's domination of subordinate classes through the elaboration and penetration of ideology into their common sense and everyday practice" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 253).

Stuart Hall (1979) has elaborated the notion of hegemony and begun to use it in the analysis of popular culture. In Hall's words, drawing on Gramsci's terminology:

> "hegemony" exists when a ruling class (or, rather, an alliance of ruling class fractions, a "historical bloc") is able not only to coerce a subordinate class to conform to its interests, but exerts a "total social authority" over those classes and the social formation as a whole. "Hegemony" is in operation when the dominant class fractions not only dominate by direct--lead: when they not only possess the power to coerce but actively organize so as to command and win the consent of the subordinated classes to their continuing sway. "Hegemony" thus depends on a combination of force and consent. But--Gramsci argues--in the liberal-capitalist state, consent is normally in the lead, operating behind "the armor of coercion" (Hall, 1977, p.332).

In the liberal capitalist societies, the dominant class does not produce and disseminate the ideology "directly and alone." Rather, no institution is devoid of hegemonic functions. Hegemony is accomplished through the agencies of the superstructures of religion, family, politics, the art, law, education and cultural institutions, as well as the coercive side of the state--the law, police, the army (Hall, 1977, p.333; Gitlin, 1980).

Similarly, Hallin (1987) argues that although the state plays a role in the propagation of the world view, the legitimating cultural system is maintained largely by private and autonomous institutions such as the family, the church and the mass media. Moreover, Gans (1980) points out, professional, organizational, economic, political and ideological forces "together" constitute images of the news which are limited in definite ways and tilted toward the prevailing frames.

In other words, the hegemony working by "ideology" (Hall, 1977, pp.332-333) implies that the "definitions of reality," favorable to the dominant class fractions, come to constitute the primary "lived reality" as such for the subordinate classes. In this way, ideology provides the "cement" in a social formation, "preserving the ideological unity of the entire social bloc." This operates as the dominant classes succeed in "framing" all competing definitions of reality "within their range", bringing all alternatives within their horizon of thought. In this way, communication may be biased through selective release of information that is favorable to the power elites, or by constraining information that is unfavorable to them (Van Dijk, 1989).

Hegemony in the News Media

According to Hallin (1987), the concept of hegemony plays a double role in the study of the media. First, it is used to "conceptualize the political function of the media" (p. 4). The media play the role of maintaining the dominant political ideology: they propagate it, glorify it, explain the world in its terms, and, at times, modify it to adapt to the demands of legitimation in a changing world.

At the same time, the concept of hegemony is employed to "explain the behavior of the media, the process of news production itself" (Hallin, 1987, p.4). Hallin (1987) observes that the media themselves are subject to the hegemonic process. The dominant ideology shapes the production of news and entertainment. That's why the media can be expected to function as agents of legitimation, despite the fact that they are independent of direct political control.

Shoemaker (1987) points out that this hegemonic approach suggests that U.S. media owners have a vested interest in seeing the status quo continue, because they are part of the U.S. power structure, defined by Dreier (1983) as "the top positions in the institutional structure of the society." The members of this powerful structure, Dreier says, may hold different opinions on some topics, but still maintaining an overall high degree of cohesiveness.

Although the media will criticize the status quo to a certain extent, thus establishing their own legitimacy as news organizations, the media will never criticize the status quo enough to seriously threaten or change it (Gitlin, 1980). Hallin (1987) also argues that even in periods when the media do not support the foreign policy elites, they tend to at least equally not support any attempt to challenge the established authorities. That's why mass media cover the one's own state's policy or action in a positive image and portray the enemy state's policy or action being wrong and unreasonable if the two countries have different opinions toward the same issue.

Some critics charge the media news with being often operated by the government to mobilize public support for the national interest and despite for enemy states. Harvey Jolotch and Marilyn Lester (1981), for example, argue that the media do not mirror reality; instead, they reflect "the practices of those having the power to determine the experience of others."

The mobilization of ideology is obvious in foreign affairs reporting. To say the media play a "hegemonic" role is to say that they contribute to the maintenance of consent for a system of power. The relevant system of power here in Western world refers to the capitalist system dominated both politically and economically by the United States, but in China, it refers to the communism or socialism.

Foreign News Coverage

Following the work of Galtung and Ruge (1965), a body of research has been developing suggesting bias in foreign news reporting. Buzek, Robison, and others (cited in Nnaemeka & Richstad, 1981) provide detailed accounts of the role of ideology in the news selection. The conclusion these studies made is that "ideology" represents a strong force in shaping both the kind of foreign news that the press in the socialist systems project to their readers, and the editorial decisions regarding the amount of Western-produced international news and information disseminated in the Communist world.

Further research on the role of ideology in shaping "news perspectives" comes from Gerbner's (1961) comparative study of the socialist Hungarian daily, Nepszabadsag and the capitalist United States New York Times, as well as other works (see also Gerbner, 1964; Gerbner and Marvayni, 1977; Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1956; Schramm, 1959).

Gerbner's analysis of the reporting pattern of the two dailies, revealed that the Times was consistent with the market-oriented ideology of a capitalist system in which conflict, tension, arousal, and sensationalism constitute the news. Several other international communication analyses, such as Shiller (1974, 1976), Gultung and Ruge (1965), Smith (1969), and Hester (1971, 1973) reach substantial conclusion.

On the basis of works similar to those cited above, many scholars (Stevenson & Cole, 1984; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1981, 1983; Chang, Shoemaker & Brendlinger, 1987; McNelly & Izcaray, 1986; Viswanath, 1988) criticize American news coverage of foreign countries--especially of less developed countries--as biased, largely because it is characterized by the violent, the bizarre, and the conflictual.

Among the sensational news that the Western press favors is the military coup. Chu (1985) remarks that "in reporting political or military crises in a foreign country, the government is usually depicted as a villain while the opposition, irrespective of its popularity, would more often than not be portrayed as the hero."

His observation is similar to the results of a work by Weaver and Wilhoit (1981 & 1983). They analyzed the foreign news coverage in AP and UPI wire services and noted that the bulk of the wire service coverage focused on political and military activity and crime.

Agbese and Ogbonadah (1988) analyzed *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*'s coverage of coups in Nigeria and remarked that if a government that was supportive of American interests was overthrown, the political change was greeted with hostility by the U.S. press. They also found that the U.S. press utilized a biased and distorted framework in its coverage of political events in the Third World.

Chomsky and Herman (1979b) contend that the Western media are part of the ideological institutions that "falsify, obscure, and reinterpret the facts in the interest of those who dominate the economy and political system." Parenti (1986) argues in a similar vein that the major role of the U.S. press "is to continually recreate a view of reality supportive of existing social and economic class power." This study thus examines the coverage of Moscow coup across three countries to investigate how each country's press constructed the reality of this foreign event.

Background of Moscow Coup

On August 19, 1991, Tass announced that Soviet Vice-President Gennady Yanayev replaced Mikhail Gorbachev as president because Gorbachev was ill and unable to perform his duties.

The new president declared that "the state of emergency" was established in order to save Soviet Union from "the profound and comprehensive crisis, political, ethnic and civil strife, chaos and anarchy that threaten the lives and security of the Soviet Union's citizens and its sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom and independence" (*Washington Post*, August 19, 1991, A1)

Vice President Yanayev was assuming presidential powers under a new entity called "the State Committee for the State of Emergency."

At that time, Gorbachev was vacationing on the Black Sea coast, and there was no word of his whereabouts.

The statement made by the Emergency Committee said that Soviet Union's new leaders wanted to live in friendship with the rest of the world and would observe all international agreements.

According to Western newspapers, these officials who seized the power were conservative Communist members and have opposed the reforms of President Gorbachev.

After establishment of the Emergency Committee, columns of tanks and armored cars had entered several parts of Moscow and key sites of Baltic republics and surrounded several important sensitive communications facilities.

Within hours of learning that Soviet President Gorbachev had been replaced, thousands of Muscovites gathered around the capital to argue and plead with the army troops and tank crews. The largest and most organized demonstrations against the takeover were led by Russian President Boris Yeltsin who urged Soviet people to resist government takeover by Communist hardliners.

On August 20, the resistance appeared to be growing around the Soviet Union with leaders in the Ukraine and Kazakhstan denouncing the takeover and thousands of people attending protest demonstrations.

On August 22, the self-proclaimed eight-man State of Emergency Committee collapsed. President Mikhail Gorbachev returned to Moscow and the members of the Committee were arrested. As news of the collapse of the Committee spread throughout the country, tanks and trucks began to leave Moscow and Baltic republics. Cheers went up among the people.

On August 23, Gorbachev demanded the resignation of his entire government and Russian President Boris Yeltsin shut down Communist Party organizations throughout the vast republic.

Study Hypotheses

Based on the previous research and information collected about the event of Soviet coup, this study attempts to answer this question: How did the political ideology of each nation influence the amount of news and the coverage pattern?

Considering this question, several hypotheses were set up to be tested. First, as described above, as soon as Muscovites learned that Soviet President Gorbachev had been replaced by Communist members, thousands of them resisted to this political change and organized demonstrations. It is thus expected that while Taiwanese and American news media covered the anti-coup demonstrations extensively, Chinese news media devoted less news space to the anti-coup demonstrations, since Taiwan and the USA are democratic countries and China is a Communist country. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H_1: The amount of news about the coup should be far less in China than in the other two countries.

Next, because Taiwan and the United States are democratic and capitalist societies, we hypothesize that:

H_2: The coverage pattern of this event across these two two capitalist countries should be similar to each other.

Moreover, because this event "overthrew" Gorbachev who was a symbol of economic and political reforms, it is assumed that the nature of this event conflicts with democratic countries' political ideology, but is compatible with Communist societies' political ideology. Thus, the following two hypotheses are formulated:

H_3: The news coverage in China tended to favor the Emergency Committee, whereas coverage in the U.S. and Taiwan favored the "reformists"--Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the demonstrators.

H_4: China government would support this event and consequently China media would use favoring terms while reporting it, whereas the U.S. and Taiwan governments would oppose this event and their media would present it in a negative frame.

These hypotheses and research question will be examined by a comparative content analysis of each nation's two newspapers' stories on this Moscow event.

Methodology

A quantitative content analysis was conducted to compare how the news event--Moscow Coup--was reported by the press in three countries--the United States, Taiwan and China during the first three-day period (August 19-21, 1991). Two prominent newspapers each from the three countries were selected for the study: *People's Daily* (*Renmin Ribao*) and *Enlightment Daily* (*Guangming Ribao*) of China; *United Daily* and *China Times* of Taiwan; and *Washington Post* and *New York Times* of the United States.

Moscow Coup occurred on August 19, 1991. Because of the twelve-hour difference between the East and the West, the time frame for the content analysis is from August 19 to 21 for American newspapers and August 20 to 22 for Taiwanese and Chinese newspapers.

The sample for this study was the straight hard news about the happening of Soviet coup and the following anti-coup demonstrations, excluding editorials, feature stories, news analyses, profiles and commentaries. Moreover, since this study attempts to test the assumption that the dominant political ideology in one country affects its Moscow coup news coverage, reportage about the reaction of one country toward this event appearing in that country's newspapers was coded.

The unit of analysis was each news story. The factors which may influence the direction of news coverage such as the origin of the news story, news source, the main actor and second actor of the story, terminologies to describe this event, event leaders and its legitimate status and the nation's reaction toward this event were coded.

Concerning the intercorder reliability, two mandarin-speaking graduate students, one from Taiwan and the other from mainland China, coded all selected Chinese news stories and both of them and one American graduate student coded all selected American news stories. Holsti's formula (1969) was used to determine the intercorder reliability coefficients. For Chinese newspapers coded by the two mandarin-speaking students, the intercorder reliability coefficient is .91 for *People's Daily* and .92 for *Guangming Daily*.

For *Washington Post*, the reliability coefficient is .82 between the American and Chinese students; .92 between the American and Taiwanese students; and .85 between the Taiwanese and Chinese students. The overall reliability coefficient among the three students is .81.

For *New York Times*, the reliability coefficient is .85 between the American and Chinese students; .93 between the American and Taiwanese students; and .89 between Taiwanese and Chinese students. The overall reliability coefficient among the three coders is .83.

Categorization

Origin of the News Story. In an effort to determine whether the event was explained from a foreign country's perspective or from one's own nation's perspective, the stories were coded if the story came from Western wire services, or staff reportage, or government-owned news agency.

News Source. This variable is used to assess the media's hegemonic function as legitimating the political authorities and government's policy. As mentioned above, the media contribute to the maintenance of consent for a system of power. For example, the media in the United States is supposed to maintain the capitalist system, so the media may rely on sources who favor capitalism in order to legitimate its foreign policy--condemn the Rightist or Communist hardliners' coup.

Main Actor and Second Actor. To test the diversity of news, each article was coded as who was the main actor and the second actor. Actors are defined as subjects of the story; individuals, groups, or other entities performing an action or affected by the action.

To be an "objective" dispenser of news, the media is supposed to present competing view points. For example, in order to present a balanced reportage, the reporters should not only cover the negative speeches made by Yeltsin or American President Bush, but also cover the speeches made by the Communist side.

Terminology. Each article was also coded for the language used to describe this event, event leaders and its legitimate status. Terms used to describe this event ranged from negative words such as "putsch," "overthrow," and "crime" to neutral terms such as "internal change," and "Kremlin power change." In addition, terminology used to describe the main figures also ranged from negative words such as "putschists," "plotters," "hoodlums,"and "hardliners" to neutral terms such as "new rules" and "new government."

The descriptive terminology about the legitimate status of this event fell into three subcategories: approval, opposition, or no description used. The approval language included terms such as "legitimate" and "constitutional." The opposition language included terms such as "unconstitutional," "illegitimate," and "misguided."

These three variables are very important because they were the symbols through which the media explained this event and made the readers unconsciously accept their interpretation.

Political events, particularly events in foreign countries, are often remote so that no involvement of the readers or viewers are permitted. Therefore, the public's interpretation of different news events usually depends on how they were "encoded" by the media.

Bennett (1980) argues that the simple act of labeling something can affect human behavior toward that thing and even "transform" the nature of the thing itself. For example, calling the event itself an "internal change," implying the normal stepdown of Gorbachev because of health problem would create a different interpretation from calling it a "military coup" that "overthrew" Gorbachev.

Reaction toward this event. Only articles relevant to the reaction of one country toward this event appearing in that country's newspapers were coded. After reviewing all the news items during the three-day time frame, the authors found 3 stories concerning the China government's reaction: 2 People's Daily stories and 1 Guangming Daily story; 12 news items about the U.S. government's reaction: 6 Washington Post stories and 6 New York Times stories; and 8 articles concerning Taiwan government's reaction: 6 United Daily stories and 2 China Times stories.

The political ideology of one country is supposed to influence that government's reaction. For example, since Taiwan is an anti-Communist country, its reaction toward this "Reactionary coup" should be negative. In addition, under the hegemonic theory, the media play the role of maintaining the dominant political ideology, and therefore, for example, the United States is supposed to put this Communist hardliners' coup in a negative image.

Findings and Discussion

Hard News about the Coup

The hypothesis that Chinese newspapers devoted less space to the coverage of the Soviet coup than did American and Taiwanese newspapers is supported by the frequency analysis shown in Tables 1 and 2. During the first three-day sample period, *Washington Post* carried 33 news stories; *New York Times*, 53; *United Daily*, 130; *China Times*, 113; however, *People's Daily* and *Guangming Daily* carried only 11 and 14 stories respectively (see Table 1).

Because the languages used in these three countries are different from one another and the typical length of a news story also differs depending on the regulation of the press in each country, the total number of articles about the Soviet coup in each newspaper per day is therefore not an unbiased criterion for comparing the amount of coverage among these three countries' newspapers. Thus, the percentage of Soviet news and of photos on the front page is computed and then is used to evaluate the importance or newsworthiness of Soviet coup in each country.

No distinct difference in the percentage of Soviet coup news on the front page was found between American and Taiwanese newspapers (see Table 2). The percentage ranges from 40 percent to 66 percent for the stories, 5 percent to 28 percent for photos in *Washington Post*. In *New York Times*, the percentage ranges from 44 percent to 49 percent for stories and from 17 percent to 36 percent for photos. In other words, the total space devoted to the coup in both American newspapers accounted for over 50 percent of the news on the front page.

Similarly, Taiwanese newspapers on average devoted over 50 percent of space on the front page to the Soviet coup during the sample period. The percentage of news ranges from 47 percent to 69 percent and of photos from 13 percent to 18 percent in *United Daily*. In *China Times*, the percentage of news ranges from 40 to 46.

The comparison of total news items and photos and of page or section location reveals similarities between American and Taiwanese newspapers as well as differences between democratic and Communist countries. On average, only one story about the coup appeared each day on the front page of Chinese newspapers. Even on August 22 when the coup failed, there was no story on the front page of *Guangming Daily*. After the coup occurred, American and Taiwanese newspapers carried extensive coverage of this event. In addition to the front page, American and Taiwanese newspapers devoted several full inside pages to cover this Soviet coup, each page with a specific theme. However, in Chinese newspapers, only some short articles were scattered on one inside page (page 4 or 6).

Origin of the Whole Story and News Source

As shown in Table 3, most of stories (67 percent) in American press system were supplied by the system's own correspondents (staff writers) or free-lance writers. Taiwanese newspapers depended primarily on the Western wire services such as AP and UPI to get the news about this event indicting that the coup in Taiwanese newspapers was portrayed most of times from the Western point of view. It is evident that the Western news agencies are influencing the agenda of Taiwanese press. However, in Chinese newspapers, since all the foreign news was supplied by the government-controlled news agency, all the news stories (100 percent) about the coup were supplied by Xinhua (New China) news agency.

Some may argue that since all the news in China was supplied by the official news agency and news in Taiwan by Western wire services, of course, their coverage of the Moscow event differed--that is, the news origin variable explains everything. However, even if the news suppliers were identical across the three countries, difference in news presentation could still emerge. For example, both Taiwanese and American press covered this event from the Western point of view, but there were differences in news presentation and emphases between the two countries. Moreover, although the official news agency in China determined what news should be released and what should not, individual writers and editors still had opportunities to treat that news with "a preferred meaning." Therefore, further analyses were conducted to examine differences of news treatment in other characteristics.

Another important difference was found in the three press systems' use of news sources. As shown in Table 4, 35 percent of American stories used U.S. government sources. Most of the stories using U.S. official sources were negative toward the coup, suggesting measures such as condemnation and suspension of economic aid. The claim that American media opposed the coup and supported the demonstrations is supported by the finding that 21 percent of news items used or quoted Yeltsin's or democratic side's opinion. Although 14 percent of American news sources was Soviet Acting President Yanayev or the Emergency Committee, it is low, compared to the percentage (25 percent) shown in Chinese press. Similar to American press, the percentage is also low in the Taiwanese press (11 percent).

Furthermore, China's press system relied heavily on the Russian official news agency. Over half (65 percent) of the news came from Tass, compared to 26 percent of Taiwanese stories. The American press seemed to have discredited the Tass source generally. While both Taiwan and China relied on Tass for further information about the coup, only 9 percent of American news was supplied by Tass.

Main Actor and Second Actor in the Lead

The comparison of the main actor in the lead also shows some notable difference among the three countries, as Table 5 illustrates. Although, across the three countries, State Committee of Emergency was the main actor in at least one of every five stories in each country, U.S. President Bush and Acting Soviet President Yanayev were most frequently found to be the main actor in American and Chinese news respectively. China government accounted for only 10 percent of man actors in China and Taiwan government accounted only 11 percent of main actors in Taiwanese news. This finding suggests that the reaction of the U.S. government toward this coup was covered more extensively in its own press than other two governments' reactions in their newspapers. However, since the U.S. reaction was negative, the coverage was consequently negative and the U.S. population may perceive this event as an immoral attempt by Communist members. The reactions among people in the three countries will be analyzed later.

Table 5 also reveals that China press's coverage of this event apparently favored the Acting President Yanayev who was the main actor in 45 percent of Chinese news, whereas in American and Taiwanese news, he appeared in only 4 percent to 7 percent of news leads. Compared to Chinese press, American and Taiwanese press devoted larger space to the anti-coup demonstrations and relatively limited space to Yanayev. The anti-coup demonstration leader Yeltsin was not mentioned at all as the news leader in Chinese newspapers, but appeared as the main actor of news leads in at least 8 percent in the United States and Taiwan. The demonstrators (Soviet people) only accounted for 5 percent of main actors in China, whereas in Taiwan and U.S., they accounted for 7 percent and 13 percent respectively.

Another important finding is that both Taiwan and American press mentioned the Emergency Committee-controlled "troops" or "soldiers" as the main actor in the lead (17 percent and 9 percent respectively), whereas the army was never mentioned in Chinese news. This may be a reflection of China government's fear that the soldiers may arouse Chinese people's memory about the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Overall, the result of the analysis on the second actor in the lead is similar to the finding on the main actor, as shown in Table 6. The percentage of State Emergency Committee was roughly the same across the three press systems. The troops were never mentioned either as the main actor or as the second actor in Chinese news. In other words, any demonstration against the coup was not covered at all by Chinese press, although Yeltsin received 10 percent as second actor. In general, these parallel findings provide basic evidence that American and Taiwanese press covered this event from the point of view of the U.S. government and pro-democracy side while Chinese press covered it from the Emergency Committee's perspective. In addition, American and Taiwanese press coverage concentrated mostly on the anti-coup actions while China focused on the Emergency Committee's (the so-called "coup plotters" in Western media) announcements about their legal act to maintain Soviet Union's unity and protect Soviets.

Quantitative Assessment of Terminology

As mentioned earlier, the use of different terms by reporters not only reflects their perception of a particular event, but conditions the way their reportage is decoded. It creates different interpretations of the same event. For example, calling the Soviet coup an "overthrow of Gorbachev," "putsch," "Rightist coup," or "crime" rather than calling it "political change," or "internal change in Soviet Union" definitely implies that the act was illegitimate and may invite readers to interpret the event negatively. This part of the analysis attempts to see how the dominant political ideology influences the media's perception of this event across the three countries.

Terminology to Name This Event

The variation among the three countries in using terminology to name this event is noteworthy. It is evident that political ideology is again a major determinant of the media's perception of the Soviet leadership change. No malicious words were used by the Communist/socialist media in reference to the Kremlin leadership change, whereas some negative language was used by media from the capitalist countries. This dichotomy found in the news treatment of this event clearly reflects their different dominant political ideology.

As Table 7 illustrates, the U. S. media used the strongest and most emotional words while reporting this event. Ten different terms were used by American newspapers to label this event. The most frequently used terms were "coup" (31 stories), "overthrow" (11 stories), "ouster" (10 stories), and "takeover" (10 stories). Other terms with negative implications were "putsch" (6 stories), "crime" (3 stories) and "grab of power" (2 stories), of which "putsch," the extreme negative and emotional term, was used only by the American newspapers.

The nature and direction of terminologies used by American and Taiwanese newspapers were similar, but the relative frequency of use was a little bit different. For Taiwanese media, similar to American press, the most frequently used term was "coup" (37 stories). Moreover, like American press, negative words such as "overthrow" (10 stories), "ouster" (26 stories), "grab of power" (11 stories), "rightist coup" (3 stories), and "crime" (2 stories) were also largely used by Taiwanese newspapers. However, while the strongly negative term "putsch" was used only by American newspapers, the comparatively neutral term "stepdown" was used only by Taiwanese press (15 stories).

In addition, some neutral terms such as "Kremlin power shift" and "political change" were also used by American and Taiwanese press. "Kremlin power shift" was used in five stories and nine stories respectively in the American and Taiwanese newspapers. However, only this kind of neutral terms were used by Chinese newspapers. Chinese press regarded the event as merely "political change." Although "coup" was mentioned in Chinese stories, that was because the story was explaining from the viewpoint of the State Emergency Committee that the act was not a "coup." Other negative terms such as "rightist coup," "crime," "overthrow," or "ouster" were never found in Chinese coverage of this event. In doing so, Chinese media suggested legitimacy of the Emergency Committee's power takeover.

Descriptive Terminology

The analysis of the descriptive terminology used to describe this event also reveals pronounced differences among the three countries, as Table 8 illustrates. Again, the result provides evidence that political ideology influenced media use of adjectives when describing this event.

The Chinese media did not use as many adjectives as did the American and Taiwanese media, failing to support the hypothesis that Chinese media used positive adjectives to describe this event. Some 85 percent of Chinese stories described this event as neither legitimate nor nonconstitutional. In other words, most of Chinese stories remained more "impartial" than American and Taiwanese newspapers. Only one story (5 percent of coverage) in Chinese newspapers reported that Yeltsin accused the Emergency Committee as an "unconstitutional" organization and only two stories (19 percent of coverage) quoted Yanayev's emphasis that the Committee was "constitutional."

Taiwanese press was neither as "impartial" as Chinese media nor as "strongly resistent" as American media toward this event. Table 8 shows that 75 percent of stories remained impartial, whereas 24 percent of stories described this event as "unconstitutional." Only 1 story (1 percent) mentioned that this event was legal.

Like the Taiwanese newspapers, only one American story (2 percent) mentioned that this act was legal. However, over 50 percent of stories described it as "unconstitutional," "illegitimate," or "misguided." The term "misguided" was used only by American press. Moreover, 19 stories (44 percent) remained impartial, the lowest percentage among the three countries.

Terminology to Name The Event Leaders

The analysis of the terminology used by newspapers to identify the event leaders shows some interesting similarities between the American and Taiwanese newspapers as well as important differences between the above two democratic countries and China.

As Table 9 illustrates, while both the American and Taiwanese newspapers used some negative terms such as "hardliners," and "putschists" to label the leaders, Chinese press used only one term, "State Emergency Committee," to name the leaders. This result supports the claim that Chinese press did not oppose the act made by the eight committee members.

Coincidentally, the most frequently used negative terms in both American and Taiwanese stories were "hardliners" (16 and 27 stories respectively) and "coup plotters/leaders" (17 and 14 stories). Other terms with negative implications used by both press were "putschists" (5 and 1 stories) and "adventurists" (4 and 1 stories). Although both American and Taiwanese newspapers sometimes used neutral terms such as "new rulers" (10 and 17 stories), "new Kremlin group/new government" (5 and 15 stories) and "Emergency Committee" (16 and 35 stories), American press used more negative terms such as "hoods/hoodlums" (one story), "renegades" (one story) and "junta" (6 stories) to name the leaders. These negative terms were not used neither by Taiwanese nor by Chinese press. Moreover, "conservatives" was used only by Taiwanese press in contrast with "reformists."

Reaction Terminology

Regarding the three countries' governmental reactions toward this event, it is found that, of 43 American straight hard news during the sample period, there were 12 stories concerning the U.S. government's reaction. All twelve stories condemned the coup and denied its legitimacy. The Bush government even asked other Western countries to suspend economic aid. This confirms that the U.S. government strongly opposed this

Communist coup.

Even though the American and Taiwanese press both condemned this event, the intensity of their reactions was different. Taiwan government's reaction was not as strong and emotional as that of the U.S. government. There were a total of eight stories in Taiwanese newspapers dealing with Taiwan government's reaction. Although this event was a Communist coup, there were only 2 (25 percent) stories stating Taiwan government's condemnation. The other six stories (75 percent) reported Taiwan government's hesitation to make any comment or any political decision since there was no official political relationship between Taiwan and the Soviet Union. Most of the news articles during the sample period concerning the impact of this event on Taiwan focused on the economic effects rather than on the political effects.

While the democratic countries were "stunned" by this event, China government proclaimed that it would not interfere in other countries' internal affairs. There was only one story concerning China government reaction in each of the selected Chinese newspapers during the three-day period. The two stories expressed the view that China government would respect the Soviet people's choice. No condemnation or accusation appeared in any Chinese news. This finding reveals that China government neither condemned this act nor approved it.

The reason China government did not support this event and claimed to be an outsider could have been that no one could predict whether this coup would succeed or not, especially when U.S. government strongly condemned this act and planned to suspend economic aid. If China government had clearly condemned or supported the coup, there was a risk. That is, if China government claimed to support this coup, diplomatic relationships would have been negatively affected if the coup failed at the end.

Conclusion

This study examined the characteristics of news coverage of the Moscow coup in three countries to detect the ideological bias in news selection and presentation. Several hypotheses were tested and most of them were strongly supported by the findings of the quantitative content analysis.

The major results of this study are the followings:

1) Political ideology was shown to influence the direction of news coverage and the amount of news devoted to this event in all the three countries. As a result, media in democratic countries tended to portray the event of Moscow coup in a negatively frame, whereas media in Communist country portrayed this event in a less negative way. In addition, the American and Taiwanese newspapers appeared to report this event from the perspective of demonstrators (Soviet public) or Gorbachev, whereas Chinese newspapers appeared to report this event from the perspective of Emergency Committee (called "coup plotter" by American newspapers).

2) Foreign policy played an important role in the direction of American news coverage, but was not manifest in Taiwanese and Chinese news coverage.

3) Overall, American coverage and Taiwanese coverage of the Moscow event were similar to each other

and both were quite different from the Chinese coverage.

This study reveals that American and Taiwanese press systems carried far more news than Chinese press system did on this event. They also gave more prominence to this event by placing more of it on the front page and many inside pages.

Moreover, U.S. government reaction and its foreign policy corresponded to the direction of news coverage of Moscow event, whereas Taiwan and China government reactions and foreign policies were not truly reflected in the news presentation; but the political ideology was apparently shown to influence their news coverage. U.S. government opposed this event and American media quoted heavily the U.S. president's and officials' condemnation and used negative and emotional terms to describe this event.

China government adopted a relatively neutral attitude--not to interfere in other countries' internal affairs--and similarly Taiwan government hesitated to make any comment. However, China's and Taiwan's "stand-by" foreign policy did not lead to a balanced or impartial news coverage. Although Chinese press used relatively neutral terms while reporting this event, their news presentation and emphases were biased to favor the Emergency Committee members and all the news about the anti-coup demonstrations were not selected. The coverage in Taiwan was also biased by emphasizing the anti-coup demonstrations and using negative terms to describe this event.

In sum, this study found that each country's news coverage of the Moscow coup was framed from an ideologically acceptable perspective to maintain the status quo. No news coverage across these countries can be found objective. Each was biased in a different way. The above major findings support the assumption of hegemony theory that the news content is framed within the ideology of the powerful to mobilize public opinion. The news coverage is stereotyped or biased in line with prevailing political views. It appears that in covering the Moscow coup, journalists encoded the news event with a "dominant or preferred meaning," constructing the social and political realities and helping to maintain the dominant political-economic system.

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Table 1

Number of Stories Related to Soviet Coup During the First Three-Day Period

	8/19	8/20	8/21	8/22	Total
U.S. Newspapers					
Washington Post					
Front Page:	1	4	4		
Inside Page:	0	13	11		
Total:	1	17	15		33
New York Times					
Front Page:	3	4	4		
Inside Page:	3	23	16		
Total:	6	27	20		53
Taiwan Newspapers					
United Daily					
Front Page:		3	3	3	
Inside Page:		41 (Page 3,4,5,6)	44 (P. 3,5,6,7)	36 (P. 3,4,5,7)	
Total:		44	47	39	130
China Times					
Front Page:		3	2	3	
Inside Page:		31 (Page3,4,5,6)	41	33	
Total:		34	43	36	113
China Newspapers					
People's Daily					
Front Page		1	1	1	
Inside Page (Page 4):		2	6	0	
Total:		3	7	1	11
Guangming Daily					
Front Page:		1	2	0	
Inside Page (Page 6):		2	6	3	
Total:		3	8	3	14

Table 2

Percentage of Soviet Coup Coverage on the Front Page

	8/19	8/20	8/21	8/22
U.S. Newspapers				
Washington Post				
Stories:	47.3%	40.23%	66.32%	
Photos:	5.36%	19.18%	27.55%	
Total:	52.66%	59.41%	93.87%	
New York Times				
Stories:	47.9%	49.47%	44.34%	
Photos:	17.32%	35.69%	34.89%	
Total:	65.22%	85.16%	79.23%	
Taiwan Newspapers				
United Daily				
Stories:		49.88%	46.73%	68.69%
Photos:		17.9%	13.72%	12.63
Total:		67.78%	60.45%	81.32%
China Times				
Stories:		45.53%	44.84%	39.71%
Photos:		20.83%	0	0
Total:		66.36%	44.84%	39.71%
China Newspapers				
People's Daily				
Stories:		11.7%	7.3%	6.77%
Photos:		0	0	0
Total:		11.7%	7.3%	6.77%
Guangming Daily				
Stories:		9.77%	10.25%	0
Photos:		0	0	0
Total:		9.77	10.25	0

Table 3

Origin of the News Story

	U.S. (N = 43)		Taiwan (N = 72)		China (N = 20)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Staff	15	34.5	12	16.7		
Freelance	14	32.6	1	1.4		
Western Wire	10	23.3	58	80.6		
Government-Owned Wire Services					20	100
Others	1	2.3				
Unidentifiable	3	7.0	1	1.4		

Table 4

News Source

	U.S. (N = 43)		Taiwan (N = 72)		China (N= 20)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
U.S. Government	15	34.9				
China Government					2	10.0
Taiwan Government			8	11.1		
U.S.S.R. Acting President/Committee	6	14.0	8	11.1	5	25.0
Yeltsin, Gorbachev Their Aides	9	20.9	12	16.7		
Tass	4	9.3	19	26.4	13	65.0
Other Countries	2	4.7				
Others	6	14.0	15	20.8		
Unidentifiable	1	2.3	10	13.9		

Table 5

Main Actor of the Lead

	U.S. (N = 43)		Taiwan (N = 72)		China (N= 20)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yanayev	3	7.0	3	4.2	9	45.0
Emergency Committee	11	25.6	18	25.0	4	20.0
Gorbachev/Aides	3	7.0	4	5.6	1	5.0
Yeltsin/Aides	4	9.3	6	8.3		
U.S. Government	13	30.2				
Soviet People Demonstrators	3	7.0	9	12.5	1	5.0
China Government					2	10.0
Taiwan Government			8	11.1		
Troops/Soldiers	4	9.3	12	16.7		
Others	1	2.3	10	13.9	3	15
Unidentifiable	1	2.3	2	2.8		

Table 6

Second Actor of the Lead

	U.S. (N = 43)		Taiwan (N = 72)		China (N= 20)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Emergency Committee	8	18.6	10	13.9	3	15
Gorbachev/Aides	9	20.9	21	29.2	2	10.0
Yeltsin/Aides	1	2.3	4	5.6	2	10.0
Soviet People Demonstrators	4	9.3	8	11.1	1	5.0
Taiwan Government			1	1.4		
Other Countries	1	2.3	1	1.4	2	10.0
Troops/Soldiers	4	9.3	4	5.6		
Others	1	2.3	4	5.6	1	5.0
Unidentifiable	15	34.9	19	26.4	9	45.0

Table 7

Terminology to Name the Event Used by Three Countries' Newspapers

(Based on the occurrence or nonoccurrence
of the term in each selected news story)

	Occurrence of the term used by newspapers in		
	U.S (N=43)	**Taiwan (N=72)**	**China (N=20)**
Coup	31	37	2
Rightist Coup (Reactionary Coup)	4	3	
Takeover	10	8	
Putsch	6		
Crime	3	2	
Internal Change (Political Change)	2	2	
Kremlin Power Shift	5	9	
Ouster (Being ousted)	10	26	
Overthrow (Being overthrew)	11	10	
Stepdown		15	
Grab of Power	2	11	

Table 8

Descriptive Terminology of the Event Used by Three Countries' Newspapers

(Based on the occurrence or nonoccurrence of the term in each selected news story)

	U.S.		**Taiwan**		**China**	
	(N=43)		**(N=72)**		**(N=20)**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Against such as Unconstitutional Illegitimate Misguided	23	53.5	17	23.6	1	5.0
Pro: Legitimate Constitutional	1	2.3	1	1.4	2	10.0
No Descriptive Terminology Found	19	44.2	54	75.0	17	85.0
Total	43	100.0	72	100.0	20	100.0

Table 9

Terminology to Name the Event Leaders used by Three Countries' Newspapers

(Based on the occurrence or nonoccurrence of the term in each selected news story)

	Occurrence of the term used by newspapers in		
	U.S. **(N=43)**	**Taiwan** **(N=72)**	**China** **(N=20)**
Hardliners	16	27	
Putschists	5	1	
New Rulers	10	17	
Adventurists	4	1	
Coup Plotters	17	14	
Hoods/Hoodlums	1		
Renegades	1		
New Kremlin Group New Government	5	15	
Junta	6		
Emergency Committee	16	35	12
Conservatives		11	

HELP WANTED: THE ADOPTION OF PERSONAL ADVERTISEMENTS BY THE DAILY PRESS

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Submitted to the annual meeting of the Association for Education in

Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC, 1995

Running head: HELP WANTED

HELP WANTED: THE ADOPTION OF PERSONAL ADVERTISEMENTS BY THE DAILY PRESS

Abstract: This study reports the findings of a national telephone survey conducted to explore the adoption of personal advertisements by the daily press. The findings show widespread adoption of these ads, with a reported 277 percent increase from 1987 to 1993. Most of the newspapers made use of voice mail technology with the ads becoming an increasingly important source of revenue. Newspapers are facing questions concerning the changing role of the newspaper in a changing society.

HELP WANTED: THE ADOPTION OF PERSONAL ADVERTISEMENTS BY THE DAILY PRESS

Individuals and organizations constantly confront new ideas, products, behaviors and technologies. These innovations have been formally defined as "ideas, practices or objects that are perceived as new by an individual or another unit of adoption."[1] Adoption is defined as "a decision to make full use of an innovation as the best course of action available" to solve problems.[2] In the case of daily newspapers, the problem is ensuring continuing revenue. Audiotex technology is an innovation which newspapers are adopting in growing numbers to improve classified advertising revenue with services such as personal advertisements.

There is little empirical research available regarding newspaper classified advertising.[3] This study contributes to this limited body of literature as well as to the literature on the adoption of innovations. The information provided in this study is useful not only to researchers, but also to newspapers that are interested in the extent of the adoption of voice technology.

Newspapers and the Adoption of Innovations

Newspaper organizations have historically been innovation adopters. In the early nineteenth century several innovations made the modern newspaper possible. Developments in the printing process, cheap paper, typography, plate-making, the telegraph, along with the social innovation of a rise in literacy, made the mass circulation press possible.[4]

Along with innovations in the physical production of the newspaper and the ability to produce large numbers of copies, another powerful innovation was the adoption of advertising in the daily press. Since 1833 when Benjamin Day found he could no longer sell his New York Sun for six cents a copy, newspapers have relied on advertising support.[5] This support comes from outside commercial enterprises and individuals in the form of retail and classified advertising.

The newspaper business evolved, changing from a time when newspapers had been driven by a strong editorial personality toward becoming the market-driven mass medium it is today. In 1879, American newspapers and periodicals received 56 percent of their revenue from circulation and 44 percent from advertising.[6] By 1889, the split was approximately 50-50. Just ten years later, ad dollars made up a majority of newspaper income; 45.5 percent of revenue came from circulation while over 54 percent came from advertising by 1899.

Since World War II, the dollar volume of the newspaper industry has grown, from $2.1 billion in 1950 to $32.2 billion in 1990. Despite the decline in the actual number of daily newspapers during the same period, newspaper ad revenue grew steadily.[7]

However, newspapers have faced an increasingly competitive market for audiences and advertisers, particularly with the rise of electronic media. Newspapers' share of advertising expenditures has declined in the last thirty years. The Newspaper Advertising Bureau reported that although newspapers enjoyed more than a thirty percent share of total advertising expenditures in 1960, the figure has steadily dropped to 29.4 percent in 1970, 27.6 percent in 1980 and 24.9 percent in 1990.[8] This trend is likely to continue as new advertising vehicles, such as interactive media, enter the market.

Classifieds in a Competitive Market

Classified advertising is considered to be "the backbone of the newspaper."[9] Pejoratively referred to by some as the "want ads," classifieds have long been a major source of newspaper ad revenue. Seventy-million adults across the United States read one or more classified advertisements per week, and of that number, 12 million follow up with an inquiry.[10] According to the Newspaper Association of America, classified advertising made up 35 percent of newspapers' $30.7 billion in ad revenue in 1986.

During the recent recession, however, newspapers suffered losses due to a decline in the three major classified advertising categories: automotive, employment and real estate. New strategies were sought to defend the $10.8 billion classified advertising base.[11] According to Newspaper Association of America President Cathleen Black

> We are at the beginning of a time when the newspaper as it is historically viewed, will take on a broader role. It doesn't only have to be a traditional newspaper as we know it.[12]

The adoption of new technologies may allow daily newspapers to remain competitive with other media such as television and cable. According to Deppa, the appearance of "phone, fax, modem and audiotex are waking papers up. Without audiotex, newspapers will be the odd man out."[13] Audiotext has been hailed by Editor and Publisher as "the lifeline that could pull newspapers out of the swamp of lost revenue."[14]

Nearly one-third of all newspapers now supply audiotext services to their readers. Callers can select items of interest from a menu printed in the newspaper. Once the item of interest is selected, callers use a touch-tone phone enter the advertisement's access code and to receive information or leave a voice message for the advertiser. In some cases these are free 1-800 number calls. In others, the 1-900 number access is billable by the minute, with prices ranging from $1 to $2 per minute.

According to Piirto, the biggest use of newspaper-based 900 numbers has been for classified advertising categories such as real estate, automotive, help wanted and personals.[15] The Baltimore Sun has a service where readers can respond to employment advertisements by leaving a voice resume. Callers can dial up not only the news and weather but classified advertisements "read" by a computerized voice providing stock-market information, housing loan rates, lottery results, pizza places, jokes, soap opera updates or to respond to personal (dating) advertisements.

Adoption of Voice Personals

Although personal ads have been around for many years, the numbers increased substantially in the 1960s and 1970s, mainly in alternative papers such as the Village *Voice* and the *Boston Phoenix*. In the late 1980s and 1990s there was an explosion of personal ads in the *daily* press. Newspapers such as the Washington *Post*, the *Green Bay Gazette*, the *San Francisco Examiner* and the *Syracuse Post -Standard* now feature these ads. Many of these large daily newspapers have begun using voice mail for the personals. The addition of voice mail personal advertisements to the repertoire of classified ads suggests an important change in sources of revenue for the daily press.

Promoted as a solution to changing lifestyles, audio enhanced personal advertisements also represent the adoption of a technological innovation for the newspaper industry. According to Webb:

> We are seeing audiotex as an evolution out of people's basic need for information. They don't necessarily take time to sit down with the newspaper in the morning. If you look at the way society is going, audiotex is simply the medium which is going to be more attractive to their lifestyle and fit right into their lifestyle.[16]

Few have addressed the importance of the addition of voice personal advertisements to the repertoire of products offered by the daily newspaper and what this represents in terms of image, function, and financial success. Rogers' model proposes that adoption of innovations in modern society offers choices that help solve the problems of daily life for individuals and organizations. Ideas, practices or objects which are perceived as new are selected and used as the best option available.[17] Previous studies have shown that the adoption of an innovation follows an S-shaped cumulative curve. The reason for the normal S-shaped curve is based upon the role of information and uncertainty reduction.

Adopter categories can be set forth as ideal types on an innovativeness continuum. The types are innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. In all of these categories, opinion leadership plays an important role. Although discussion of the adoption of innovations tends to focus primarily on the individual, organizations also adopt. Examples include computerization of government offices, computerized photographic feeds of newspapers, and technology in schools.

The growing adoption of personal ads implies that a transition is also taking place in dating behavior. Previous studies of this phenomenon have been primarily conducted by researchers in the disciplines of family studies, sociology and to a lesser extent, marketing. For example, Hirschman analyzed the personals from a marketing perspective, noting the phenomenon as a "complex, heterogeneous marketing exchange."[18] Other studies have addressed the issue of physical appearance,[19] aging,[20] deviance,[21] relationship development,[22] gender differences[23] and differences based on sexual orientation.[24]

Mate-seeking through similar electronic media has been explored in articles recounting the experiences of popular communication patterns. Users of the French *Minitel* system have been found to post messages soliciting romantic adventures to a community bulletin board, often withholding their identity or using a pseudonym.[25] It has been suggested that this activity is seen as "the emotional equivalent of safe sex in an age when physical contact is often associated with contamination."[26] Adelman and Ahuvia reviewed the growth of "marriage market intermediaries" by discussing various formats from video-dating services to personal advertisements.[27] These researchers argued that these artificial partner-seeking environments foster inappropriate disclosures that actually hinder the process rather than facilitating it .

Method

This study was conducted to gauge the extent of adoption of voice mail personal advertisements. Additional information was sought about the reasons newspapers have added the ads, methods of responding to the ads, and the physical characteristics of this section of the newspaper. This is a descriptive study. No formal hypotheses were tested.

A telephone survey was conducted to measure the extent of the adoption of personal advertisements by daily newspapers. The sampling frame consisted of 268 newspapers with circulations of 50,000 or more as listed in *Editor & Publisher Yearbook, 1991*. A random sample of 67 newspapers was drawn using the systematic skip interval method.

From November 1992 to May 1993, interviews were conducted with classified managers at each of the 67 newspapers. A 100 percent response rate was achieved. The newspaper managers were called during regular business hours, typically in mid-afternoon when deadline pressure was less likely to interfere. Occasionally, reaching the right person to interview was difficult. At one California paper, the interviewer was connected with seven different people before finally reaching the appropriate person. Approximately two to three calls were necessary to complete each interview. Two newspapers refused to answer the questions by phone but did reply via fax.

These representatives were asked if the newspaper was running voice personals, and if so, the year of adoption. Additional questions addressed any criteria used in accepting or rejecting ads, such as those from gays/lesbians or "alternative lifestyle" ads, such as those seeking multiple partners or more exotic variations. Other questions concerned the mechanics of the ads, the days of the week the ads ran, how responses were made to the ads, and what costs were involved. A sample page (tear sheet) was requested from each paper to verify these replies.

Findings

Nearly four out of five (55) of the newspapers reported carrying personal advertisements, as Table 1 shows. An additional 11 percent of the dailies said they had plans to add the personals within the next few months. Five newspapers were not carrying dating ads, nor did they indicate having any plans for doing so.

Table 1
NEWSPAPER ADOPTION OF THE PERSONALS

	Frequency	Percent
Carries	55	82.1
Plans to add	7	10.4
No plans to carry	5	7.5
	67	100.0

Table 2 shows nearly two-thirds of the newspapers began running the ads between 1991 and May of 1993.

Table 2

YEAR OF ADOPTION OF THE PERSONALS

Year	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1993	6	10.9	100
1992	21	38.1	89.1
1991	17	30.9	50.9
1990	6	10.9	20.0
1989	1	1.8	9.1
1988	1	1.8	7.3
1987	3	5.5	5.5

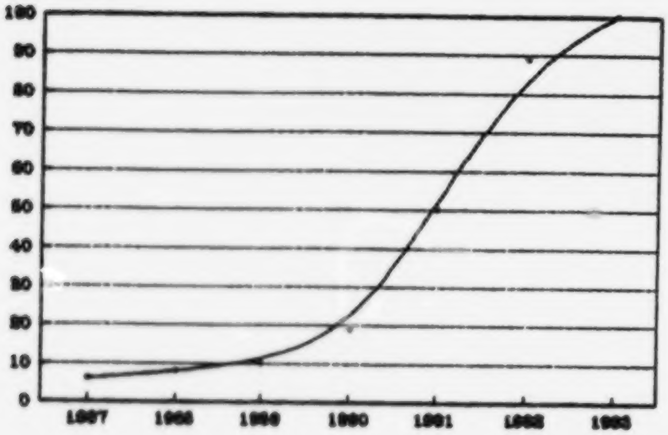
Total	55	100

Figure 1 shows that the cumulative diffusion curve follows a classic S-shaped pattern.

Figure 1

CUMULATIVE ADOPTION OF
PERSONAL ADVERTISEMENTS BY NEWSPAPERS

1987 - 1993



More than one third of personal ads sections (36 percent) occupied one-half to one page of space. Another third of the papers filled 1 to 2 pages. Two newspapers (3 percent) had personal ads sections of three pages or larger while the remainder of the papers had sections of one-half a page or less. Nearly two-thirds of the newspapers ran the personals in a full-sized section of the newspaper while a smaller percentage presented the personals in tabloid inserts.

More than a third of the dailies (36 percent) ran the ads on Fridays, Saturdays and/or Sundays. Approximately 27 percent of the papers ran the ads on some combination of weekdays and about a quarter of the papers ran the ads seven days per week. A few papers had other arrangements.

Newspapers also varied in the types of advertisements they would accept. As Table 3 reveals, half (50.9 percent) would not accept gay ads. Most (76.4 percent) would not accept "alternative lifestyle" ads. More than two-thirds of the newspapers applied their

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

own criteria to screening the language of the ads while 22 percent relied on a voice mail service to perform this task.

Table 3

ACCEPTANCE POLICY

	Frequency	Percent
Accepts gay ads	27	49.1*
Does not accept gay ads	28	50.9

	Frequency	Percent
Accepts alternative lifestyle ads	13	23.6
Does not accept alternative lifestyle ads	42	76.4

* Newspapers may have a combination of these policies, totals therefore do not equal 100%.

Voice mail was found to be the most common method of responding to personals (79 percent). Only nine papers offered the more traditional way of responding, which is by letter only (13.4 percent). Frequently, the daily newspaper was not the only local publication carrying the personals. Two-thirds of the papers surveyed had competition from another local paper for personal advertisers (66 percent).

Although most of the newspapers surveyed would not reveal detailed financial information, almost half of the papers indicated that the ads had been a financial success. According to one manager, the paper received approximately 300 ads per month and that the average time spent responding is 3 minutes at a cost of $1.95 per minute. Even if the advertiser's ad is free, each ad generates approximately $108. This would result in revenues of over $30,000 per month or roughly $400,000 per year. Another paper indicated that their take was over $500,000 during the past year.

Many papers have invested in their own voice mail hardware. Others rely on vendors. The financial success of the personals has been a selling point for the many voice mail vendors involved in the personal ads business. Although this study did not specifically investigate the involvement of vendors, many representatives mentioned that the work load (and the revenue) are shared with a vendor. Often, these companies manage the advertising placement, response retrieval, and reply process. Most vendors represent more than one newspaper. Compensation arrangements vary. For example, one newspaper representative indicated her paper takes 90 percent of the revenue generated from the ads and the vendor retains 10 percent.

Discussion

The findings suggest that daily newspapers have adopted voice mail personals as a course of action available to solve three problems: revenue, readership and service.

Revenue. A newspaper is primarily a business and in the midst of the recent economic recession many papers sought ways to replace lost revenue. In many cases, the organizational decision was made to pursue a solution through the adoption of a new technology--voice mail--which has provided a means of generating revenue through charges for access to advertisers and respondents.

Readership. The addition of personal ads suggests that newspapers are looking to (1) increase readership of the newspaper by attracting non-subscribers in general, (2) increase readership of the newspaper by the lucrative but shrinking younger audience and, (3) draw readers into the classified section of the newspaper in hopes that they would read and respond to other classified advertisements.

Service. Many of the newspapers cited the altruistic duty of the newspaper to serve the public. One way of doing this was by helping people meet people. Representatives suggested that the dating community is changing because people are particularly busy, many of whom are caring for children. Women's involvement in the labor force was also cited. These characteristics of modern life therefore limit the options of people seeking to meet others.

It is important to note that this was a study of *daily* newspapers, rather than of the alternative press. Those dailies that had not adopted the personals cited reasons such as conflicts with the "family image" of the newspaper, not being a "proper role" for the daily newspaper and attracting unsavory advertisers to the paper. All of these reasons are part of traditional perceptions surrounding personal advertisements. In addition, there is stigma associated with running an ad for a date. A common perception has been that a person must be desperate and dateless to do so. The widespread adoption of personal advertisements by the daily press suggests that perceptions are changing on part of the public and the newspaper community.

Newspaper personal ads imply a changing role for the daily newspaper in contemporary society. The mating trade is now worth millions of dollars and takes a variety of forms, from 1-900 telephone numbers to introduction services. The importance of this to newspapers is multi-fold. A financial problem for newspapers is the diminishing numbers of subscribers. This translates into reduced audiences for advertising. As a result, newspapers have narrowly targeted sections in hopes of attracting more readers. Efforts to capture the elusive younger audience has motivated many newspapers to add personal advertisements to its repertoire of services. The personal ads section serves a need for users and viewers--a dating and entertainment function. These uses translate into hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in revenue. The amount of revenue generated is likely to vary with market size, promotional efforts, and amount of repeat business.

Newspapers also need to compete with other media for these audiences. To do so, they must remain competitive technologically as well as in terms of their content. Newspapers have a variety of tools to serve readers that go far beyond the confines of the printed page. Fax information, on-line data retrieval, and telephone news lines are now available to provide readers with a tremendous amount of information that the paper simply does not have room to print.

Some critics might suggest that providing access to dates for members of the community is not a suitable role for the press. These critics may feel that using precious space to advertise call-in services for dates, jokes and other seemingly frivolous items, trivializes the newspaper. This may lower the reputation of newspapers in the eyes of an increasingly skeptical readership.

In addition, personal advertisements and the voice technology used by them may only be a fad--a passing fancy of readers soon to be replaced by some other preoccupation. Newspapers are spending a considerable amount of money to carry these ads. Adopting voice personals requires that the newspaper pay for expensive voice mail equipment or to share the revenue with vendors. The opportunity for vendors to make a tremendous amount of money through the newspapers could be a problem. For example, a newspaper may unable to ascertain whether the vendor is operating in an ethical manner. For example, an unscrupulous vendor may seek to increase responses by planting intriguing yet phony ads. These are questions the newspapers need to address when considering adoption of the personals, summarized in Table 4 (next page).

Table 4

Implications for Newspapers of Carrying Personal Advertisements

Advantages

- Revenue producer.
- Attracts readers and potential subscribers.
- Provides a service to the community.
- Creates another use for the newspaper.
- Keeps the newspaper competitive with other media.
- Encourages relationships with outside vendors.

Disadvantages

- Requires the newspaper pay for expensive equipment or share revenue with suppliers.
- A source of potential liability to the newspaper.
- A loss to the community of service as detracting from the proper role of a daily newspaper.
- Questionable nature of vendors.

The findings of this study suggest several areas of future research. For example, the adoption of voice mail services in general, and personal ads specifically, suggests a fundamental change in the newspaper as it has traditionally been known. Future studies could exam this changing role of the newspaper. Another area of research is the phenomenon of the organizational adoption of innovations by the newspaper. Also, factors of resistance to innovations on the part of newspapers. The personal advertisements themselves represent a wealth of information on the users and readers of the daily paper. In addition, the availability of a technology that facilitates the dating and meeting process suggests a change in popular perceptions of securing a partner.

As well as being a possible source of new revenue and a sign of changing lifestyles, voice mail personal advertisements also suggest a new function for the daily press, evolving out of people's basic information needs. That information can also include the availability of people within the community who are looking for some type of personal relationship. Just as one can order up information on how IBM stock is trading, so too can people call up to get more information about a "single white male, 32, looking for good times." As the adoption of personal advertisements adds to the repertoire of products featured in an evolving daily press, newspapers have to face questions about the changing role of the newspaper in a changing society. As individuals in a mass society come to rely on the media for information, the media respond by redefining themselves through the adoption of new communications technologies.

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NEWSPAPER DIVISION

Unnamed Sources in White House Coverage

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Unnamed Sources in White House Coverage

> "I think there are a few major historical developments that happened in journalism--the Pentagon Papers, maybe Watergate--where anonymous sources had a more positive influence than a negative impact. But on balance, the negative impact is so great that we can't overcome the lack of trust until or unless we ban them."
>
> --Al Neuharth[1]

This paper examines unnamed or veiled sources (e.g., "a senior White House official said today...") in coverage of the White House. Unnamed attribution is problematic because readers cannot assess credibility of unnamed and unaccountable sources.[2] It may allow "self-serving officials to define issues without accepting responsibility" or reporters to "extrapolate, even fabricate, information."[3] And, it may be argued, by granting anonymity to official sources, reporters function as, or assume the role of, advocates for those sources' policies.[4]

But granting anonymity may be the only way to get a story.[5] Indeed, ethics codes acknowledge the practice as "a last resort."[6] Both anecdotal reports[7] and systematic content analyses, however, suggest that unnamed attribution is a "widely condemned and frequently practiced"[8] last resort.

Culbertson's[9] 1974 study of 12 papers found a third of items--54% in the New York Times and Washington Post--used unnamed sources. And 70-75% of stories in Newsweek and Time used them;[10] Wulfemeyer[11] found similar results. Brown et al.[12] examined front-page stories in the Times, Post and four North Carolina dailies: over 50% of sources in national stories were veiled, compared to 38% in local stories. An 1885-1985 study[13] of the New York Times and Los Angeles Times found a "dramatic increase" in anonymous attribution. A more modest 1974-1984 comparison[14] found veiled attribution used less often and more cautiously by Florida reporters in 1984.

Blankenburg's computerized search of the New York Times, Washington Post and Los Angeles Times[15] examined veiled attribution in controversial coverage and when criticism of authorities was involved. He concluded that unnamed attribution has a "civic value" because it "increases diversity of viewpoints and criticism of the powerful."

But while Blankenburg argued for the utility of unnamed sources in promoting a marketplace of ideas, Denham asked about their impact on credibility, pointing to "inherent problems with citing unnamed officials--namely the distorted news that sometimes results."[16] He examined New York Times coverage of foreign policy and the Clinton health package, finding more unnamed attribution in foreign policy than in domestic coverage. In the former, sources were at greater risk personally and professionally ("the wrong comment could have had serious implications"), while "commentary on the health plan was 'safe ground' for public officials."

But while scholars/critics may disagree on trade-offs of credibility for diversity that come with unnamed attribution, the question remains whether it matters to readers? There is only limited evidence that they notice.

Adams'[17] 1957 experimental study found unnamed sources more influential in some instances than named sources. His 1960 study[18] reported little evidence unnamed sources were less acceptable on an "acceptance-rejection" scale. But rated sources were presented out of context (e.g., subjects rated only the term "authorities").

Adams[19] then compared acceptance of unnamed and control sources in actual news leads; differences were contingent on the "cognitive field" created by the leads and institutions cited (e.g, "a government source"). Riffe's[20] replication found less favorable ratings for unnamed, government sources, a shift credited to public loss of confidence in government.

Culbertson and Somerick[21] found subjects were suspicious of out-of-context unnamed sources but did not judge stories using them less credible. In fact, stories with veiled sources were more interesting. Public affairs knowledge was related to positive view of unnamed attribution.[22] In a quasi-experimental study of over 400 students, Hale[23] found unnamed attribution less important than story type (factual versus "opinionated") in influencing reader evaluations.

But the fact that unnamed sources don't trigger a "warning flag" for readers means reporters must be doubly cautious. Some unnamed sources have altruistic motives; others float "trial balloons" or "grind an ax" without accountability.[24] Yet a survey[25] of editors and news directors found only one in four organizations had explicit unnamed attribution policies.

This study examines veiled attribution from the perspective of White House efforts to manage information,[26] efforts that have, in the past, ranged from dictating press conference protocol[27] to attempting to plug "leaks." The four presidencies studied (Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton) varied in extent of information control or management.

Jimmy Carter's administration was regarded, if not as downright inefficient at information management, then at least as relatively open. Press secretary Jody Powell[28] said he spent too much time with minor issues to plan information strategy.

But some suggested that Carter represented "the traditional tendency of Democrats to be more forthcoming with the press."[29] Others said he had thrown down the gauntlet of a "higher ethical standard" with his campaign promise that "I'll never lie to you,"[30] and that to be less than open would be anathema to the president.[31] Even after the press allegedly hounded Carter friend Bert Lance from office, Carter refused to blame the press.[32]

Columbia Journalism Review[33] wrote that Carter had shown sensitivity to journalists by supporting confidentiality of sources, and by holding twice-monthly news conference free-for-alls. A study by Burris showed that Carter said more in response to fewer press conference questions than any president from Johnson to Reagan.[34] One observer[35] wrote that Carter public relations specialists "were often frustrated by the president's unwillingness to recognize the importance of courting the press and managing the information environment effectively."

By contrast, reporters encountered "a conscious effort on the part of the Reagan administration to reassert presidential dominance."[36] Reagan's public personas were carefully managed;[37] his staff "knew they had to plan ahead to maximize good news, and also, if possible, to bury bad news."[38] Washington Monthly editor Michael Nelson[39] said the administration "refined the task of information management to an art, alternating techniques of secrecy and publicity to shape the flow and even the spin of news."

Meetings with the press were infrequent and formal. Even during the "initial vacuum of criticism" of "the Great Communicator," Reagan staffer David Gergen labored to control the daily news agenda at the White House.[40]

> "Following a carefully orchestrated policy of planning ahead, staying on the offensive, controlling the flow of information (both by inundating journalists with positive information and making potentially negative information more difficult to get), limiting direct access to the president, only talking about issues the administration wanted to talk about, speaking in one voice and repeating the same message many times, the Reagan administration was able to control the media environment with remarkable and unprecedented success for most of its two terms."[41]

The White House also moved to narrow provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, to broaden government power to classify material, and to increase control over individuals in the administration.[42] The CIA ended traditional not-for-attribution background briefings on unclassified matters. An executive order sought to make more than 10,000 employees submit for prior review any speeches or articles they wrote.[43]

In order to meet Reagan's goal of limiting information flow to the public, the Defense Department announced that persons with access to classified information were subject to lie detector tests at any time. The White House reversed a Carter policy and allowed infiltration of media by the FBI and CIA if the attorney general believed national security was at risk. Finally, a proposal was initiated requiring that officials would have to clear speeches or writing even after they left government positions.[44]

Critics warned that, because of Reagan's success, subsequent administrations would be unlikely to back away from information management as a strategy.[45] However, George Bush's initial relationship with the press was far less formal than his predecessor's. Like Carter's, Bush's administration seemed to lack "a clearly defined media strategy." He was "neither enamored of linking policy and media strategies nor particularly good at making this connection."[46] He was "a stickler for secrecy" who nonetheless appeared before reporters more than any president since Franklin Roosevelt, and "managed the news by putting out lots of information, virtually all of his own choosing."[47]

According to Time's Michael Duffy, Bush "actually liked the press and only disliked certain members who didn't favor him. He had a pretty reasonable attitude about the media."[48] On the other hand, insiders say Bill Clinton brought both personal animosity and professional distrust of the press to the White House.

The administration that successfully campaigned via "new media" (talk shows, MTV, etc.) "is fully cognizant of the political advantages" of exposure unmediated by the Washington press corps, and has been neither courting nor managing the press with the effectiveness of the Reagan administration. That has hurt on issues such as Whitewater, but replacing communications chief George Stephanopoulis with Gergen, one of Reagan's "gang of four" news managers, shows the lesson was not lost on Clinton.[49] Whether Gergen's doing or not, Clinton garnered 41% more first-year newspaper attention than Bush.[50]

Of course, Stephen Hess[51] argues, all presidents try to bypass the press corps (via Oval Office speeches, radio addresses, etc.), but Clinton was the first to conclude that "he didn't need the White House reporters, that it was not necessary to be filtered through the press corps."[52]

Moreover, "Clinton does not seem to like journalists."[53] He took months to meet with journalists who had not covered his campaign. According to CBS's Bill Plante, "They believe that we are not very bright, that we are obstructionist, so they try as best they can to get around us."[54] The final straw may have been Stephanopoulos' efforts to limit press corps mobility; Reuters' George Gibbons reports that White House correspondents were forbidden to enter the press secretary's office.[55]

We assume that these information management efforts have at least some effect, impacting number of published stories and source willingness to be named. We anticipate more stories from named sources in open administrations. In a more managed atmosphere, stories would use more anonymous sources, whether because of desperate, altruism-driven "leakers," or as a result of careful "feeding" of leaks as part of a news management strategy.

We examined a month of coverage in these four presidents' "honeymoon," that post-inauguration time when reporters allegedly hold off asking hard questions and administrations that may have campaigned as Washington outsiders learn how things work.[56] Nelson calls this the "alliance phase" when journalists and the White House "have a shared interest in promoting 'gee whiz' stories about the new president's personality and policy agenda."[57]

While the honeymoon may not represent the entire term of office, it does reveal the administration's "baseline" openness, before run-ins with the press may lead to concerted information management. Columbia Journalism Review wrote that, "A president will customarily take office committed to openness and frankness with the press, only to find even the best resolves crumbling under the pressure of events and the frictions of the adversary relationship."[58]

Several hypotheses were developed for testing. Because of the Carter administration's openness, H1: There will be more news stories about the Carter White House than about the Reagan, Bush or Clinton administrations.

H2: A smaller percentage of news stories about the Carter White House will contain unnamed attribution than will Reagan, Bush or Clinton stories.

H3: There will be more individual news sources quoted in Carter stories than in Reagan, Bush or Clinton stories.

H4: A smaller percentage of sources in Carter stories will be unnamed than in Reagan, Bush or Clinton stories.

Method

Ideally, we'd sample coverage from an entire administration and from different newspapers. For exploratory purposes, we focused on the February following the inaugurations of Presidents Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton, and on a single newspaper, the New York Times. While the paper's reputation for thoroughness and quality[59] makes it ideal for between-administration comparisons, the study is limited in its generalizability.

All issues (on microfilm) in February 1977, 1981, 1987 and 1993 were examined. Washington-datelined items and the subset about the White House were identified: coders looked for cues in the first five paragraphs, such as reference to the White House, the administration, the president (by name or title), etc.

Named and unnamed sources for each story were then counted. Only sources that were anonymous throughout were counted as unnamed; an initially unnamed but later identified source was counted as named.

Finally, we examined the "tenor" of what was attributed to unnamed sources, in terms of criticism of or disagreement with the administration or its policies. We were guided by

Blankenburg's[60] finding that unnamed attribution often veils criticism of the powerful, but informed by the fact that leaks are often orchestrated by the White House itself. "(S)uch leaks are intended to make the president look good: Personal success for presidential assistants, after all is tied very closely to the political success of the president."[61]

In evaluating tenor, we relied on factual content (did the attributed information contradict an administration assertion?), contrasting conjunctions ("but," "however," etc.) or attribution verbs (e.g., "disagreed"), and labels (e.g., "a Clinton *critic* said").

A reliability check between the authors found 78% simple agreement on topic, 94% on source status (named or unnamed) and 74% on "tenor" of assertion.

Findings

In total, 319 items were identified and coded from the four Februarys. They were not distributed equally (see Table One). In fact, the data indicate a monotonic decrease in coverage, in terms of number of White House stories (from 102 articles in Carter's February to 65 in Clinton's). H1, predicting more honeymoon stories about the Carter White House, was thus supported.[62]

The frequency of Carter items arguably reflects the initial openness, accessibility and willingness to talk of the Carter administration. The lack of White House sophistication may have made it easy for the press to mine stories; fans might argue that the Carter White House simply had more new ideas to offer than did successive administrations.

The decreasing trend, on the other hand, also supports critics' prediction that post-Reagan presidents would be unlikely to abandon successful information management strategies. It is possible, of course, that rather than running less White House coverage, the post-Carter Times featured fewer but longer stories about the White House. We did not, however, measure item length.

Recall that Miller and Pavlik[63] found Clinton receiving 41% more first-year coverage than Bush. Our study found no such gap in the first months of the two presidents. Apparently, the rest of year one--after Clinton hired David Gergen--saw a boost in Clinton visibility.

H2, predicting a smaller percentage of Carter-honeymoon stories would contain unnamed sources, was supported: 62% of Carter stories contained at least one unnamed source, while the post-Carter percentages increased monotonically (83%, 85% and 86%). The computed chi-square (21.1, 3 d.f., p=.0001) indicates a statistically significant pattern. The smaller percentage of Carter stories using unnamed sources--given the greater number of Carter stories--argues for an interpretation of an open White House, where sources felt free to cooperate with--and give their names to--the press.

And, because leaks and unnamed attribution are sometimes indicative of carefully managed "feeding" of information to the press by White House staffers, the increasing percentages point to more careful manipulation during the post-Carter presidential honeymoons.

Admittedly, there is a risk in operationalizing unnamed attribution in terms of whether a story has any unnamed sources. A story with 9 of its 10 sources unnamed counts the same as a story with 10 sources but only one unnamed.

Thus, Table One also examines individual sources as units of analysis. Though there were more stories (102) during Carter's than Reagan's February (84), there were more sources (398) cited in the fewer Reagan stories. H3, predicting more individual news sources would be quoted in Carter stories than in Reagan, Bush or Clinton stories, was not supported. The Carter White House was covered more (number of items) but fewer sources were cited than in Reagan items. Carter- Bush and Clinton contrasts in number of sources were consistent with H3.

Did Carter-era openness mean greater willingness by fewer sources to "tell all"? Did the Reagan administration's management efforts force more reporter digging--and more sources per story?

Across all four presidents' honeymoons, fewer sources-per-item were used in Carter coverage. Indeed, Clinton stories--the least frequent--averaged more sources per story (5.4) than preceding administrations. Again, length of story could be a factor; scarcer Clinton stories may have been longer (and thus had more sources).

H4 predicted a smaller percentage of sources in Carter honeymoon stories would be unnamed. The hypothesis was supported. Over two-thirds (68%) of all 378 sources in Carter items were named, compared to 63% of the 351 Clinton sources and just over half the 398 Reagan and 295 Bush sources.

When contrasts were based on number of unnamed-sources-per-item, Carter averaged fewest (1.2), and Clinton (1.98) averaged slightly fewer than Republicans Bush (2.1) and Reagan (2.2).

In sum, the data support the view of a more open Carter administration (or subsequent administrations' more careful feeding of information to the press by staff) and resulting differences in unnamed attribution in coverage. There were more Carter items, a smaller percentage of them used unnamed attribution, they averaged fewer unnamed sources per item, and a larger percentage of total sources were named. But Carter stories also averaged fewer total sources (named and unnamed combined), perhaps because fewer--but more talkative--sources were needed for reporters to complete a story.

Table Two, exploring tenor of unnamed source assertions, reveals insight into use of unnamed sources. Note the difference between the first and last pair of administrations. Though fewer unnamed sources were in Carter stories, more than half (55%) were partisan; 29% were critical of the administration. Successive administrations saw increases in neutral unnamed source assertions, as fewer leakers had an ax to grind--or were willing to buck the administrations' information management efforts. Over a third (37%) of Reagan unnamed sources were partisan;

nearly a fourth were critical. But fewer than a fourth of unnamed sources in Bush and Clinton items were partisan, and only one in 10 Clinton unnamed sources was critical.

Conclusions

This study has limitations. It examined only one paper and one month early in only four presidents' terms. Future research might focus on different phases of a presidency, to see how evolving press relations impact unnamed sources in coverage. The design could include TV news and other newspapers. Historical perspective might be gained by including earlier presidents.

Still, the Times is a leader in investigative coverage of government. And the honeymoon provides a baseline perspective, before conflicts precipitated change in initial press tactics and led to altered White House information management efforts (e.g., the Clinton demotion of Stephanopoulis).

As anticipated, the patterns of coverage and unnamed source use varied from presidency to presidency, generally supporting the notion of more, open, named-source coverage from an open administration (Carter's) and less coverage but more veiled sources in a more closed, managed administration (Reagan's).

Admittedly, there are broad differences between stories merely using unnamed sources and those based primarily or even exclusively on them; between reporter-initiated or administration-placed stories using veiled attribution; and between investigative reports that rely on guarantees of confidentiality and those routine stories that are augmented by material from an unnamed source. (That is, some sources are unnamed simply because their names mean little to readers. A minor functionary reporting that Ronald Reagan was to meet with Bob Dole might be called simply "a White House source." No trial balloon is being flown; no whistle is being blown; no ax is being honed. Some sources in each of the four Februarys studied would qualify for such innocent veiling.)

Still, the contrast between open and managed administrations makes even the pattern of neutral unnamed source assertions problematic. Over half of Carter unnamed sources were advocates of a position. That comparatively large percentage may be indicative of the unfocused, unmanaged Carter White House. By contrast, later growth in neutral anonymous assertions may have signaled a "tighter lid" on staff activity.

There may be other explanations for between-administration differences in coverage and unnamed sources. We've examined those differences in the context of conventional wisdom about the Carter administration being open and, well, unsophisticated, in press dealings, and about tightly managed Reagan press relations.

One goal in administration information management efforts is control or taming of an adversarial press. It seems, based on the data here, that the effect of management efforts goes beyond putting greater emphasis on photo opportunities, limiting the number of press conferences and setting the order of questioning.

Those efforts effectively limit the White House news made available to the public, and impact the need--or opportunity--for sources to speak on and off the record. That makes the press's job more difficult. How well the public is served--when anonymous sources play an increasingly important part in a decreasing amount of White House news--is open to question.

Notes

1. "Commentary: On Anonymous Sources," The Freedom Forum Weekly, Vol. 1, No. 26, Dec. 12, 1994, p. 2.

2. Philip Meyer, Ethical Journalism (New York: Longman, 1987), p. 148. Ralph S. Izard, Hugh M. Culbertson and Donald A. Lambert, Fundamentals of News Reporting 3rd ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1977), p. 185. See also Bruce M. Swain, Reporters' Ethics (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1978).

3. Bryan Denham, "Anonymous Government Sources in the New York Times' Coverage of the Middle East Peace Accords, the Conflict in Bosnia and the Clinton Health Care Package," paper presented at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Atlanta, 1994.

4. Michael Parenti, Inventing Reality: The Politics of News Media (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993). See also Robert Entman, Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

5. Edmund B. Lambeth, Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession 2nd ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1992) pp. 164-165. John L. Hulteng, The Messenger's Motives (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976) pp. 85-105.

6. See K. Tim Wulfemeyer, "The Use of Anonymous Sources and Related Ethical Concerns in Journalism: A Comparison of the Effects of the Janet Cooke/'Washington Post' Incident on the Policies and Practices of Large Newspapers and Television Stations," paper presented at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism, Athens, Ohio, 1982.

7. Stephen Hess, The Government/Press Connection: Press Officers and Their Offices (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1984) pp. 75-94.

8. William B. Blankenburg, "The Utility of Anonymous Attribution," Newspaper Research Journal, 13 (Winter/Spring 1992):10-23.

9. Hugh M. Culbertson, "Veiled News Sources--Who and What are They?" ANPA News Research Bulletin No. 3, May 14, 1975.

10. Hugh M. Culbertson, "Veiled Attribution--An Element of Style?" Journalism Quarterly, 55 (Autumn 1978):456-465.

11. K. Tim Wulfemeyer, "How and Why Anonymous Attribution Is Used by Time and Newsweek," Journalism Quarterly, 62 (Spring 1985):81-86, 126.

12. Jane D. Brown, Carl R. Bybee, Stanley T. Wearden and Dulcie M. Straughan, "Invisible Power: Newspaper News Sources and the Limits of Diversity," Journalism Quarterly, 64 (Spring 1987):45-54.

13. Bernadette Barker-Plummer, "Look Who's Talking: A Study of Institutional Sources in Two Major Papers 1885-1985," paper presented to the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C., 1989.

14. Byron St. Dizier, "Reporters' Use of Confidential Sources, 1974 and 1984: A Comparative Study," Newspaper Research Journal, 6 (Summer 1985):44-50.

15. Blankenburg, "The Utility of Anonymous Attribution."

16. Denham, "Anonymous Government Sources in the New York Times' Coverage."

17. John B. Adams, "Effects of Reference Groups and Status on Opinion Change," Journalism Quarterly, 37 (Summer 1960):408-412.

18. John B. Adams, "The Relative Credibility of 20 Unnamed News Sources," Journalism Quarterly, 62 (Winter 1962):79-82.

19. John B. Adams, "Unnamed Sources and the News: A Follow-Up Study," Journalism Quarterly, 41 (Spring 1964):262-264.

20. Daniel Riffe, "Relative Credibility Revisited: How 18 Unnamed Sources are Rated," Journalism Quarterly, 57 (Winter 1980):618-623.

21. Hugh M. Culbertson and Nancy Somerick, "Cloaked Attribution--What Does it Mean to News Readers?" ANPA News Research Bulletin No. 1, May 19, 1976.

22. Hugh M. Culbertson and Nancy Somerick, "Variables Affect How Persons View Unnamed News Sources," Journalism Quarterly, 54 (Spring 1977):58-69.

23. F. Dennis Hale, "Unnamed News Sources: Their Impact on the Perceptions of Stories," Newspaper Research Journal, 5 (Winter 1984):49-56.

24. Hess, The Government/Press Connection, pp. 77-78. See Time Magazine staffer Laurence J. Barrett's Gambling With History: Reagan in the White House (New York: Doubleday, 1983), p. 430.

25. K. Tim Wulfemeyer, "Use of Anonymous Sources in Journalism," Newspaper Research Journal, 4 (Winter 1983):43-50.

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26. Former LBJ press secretary George E. Reedy argues that information management efforts began in earnest with Franklin Roosevelt and that all presidents since FDR have attempted to manipulate the press. "There They Go Again," Columbia Journalism Review (May/June 1983):35-36.

27. Craig Allen, "News Conferences on TV: Ike-Age Politics Revisited," Journalism Quarterly, 70 (Spring 1993):13-25; and Laurence J. Barrett, "The Presidential Press Conference," in Ray E. Hiebert and Carol Reuss, eds., Impact of Mass Media: Current Issues (New York: Longman, 1985), pp. 227-234.

28. Jody Powell, The Other Side of the Story (New York: William Morrow, 1984), pp. 297-314.

29. Michael X. Della Carpini, "Critical Symbiosis: Three Themes on President-Press Relations," Media Studies Journal 8 (Spring 1994):185-197.

30. Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover, "Bert Lance, the Newshounds, and Dog Days in Washington," Columbia Journalism Review (Nov./Dec. 1977):27-31.

31. Of course, Carter's own openness was often dysfunctional; he did tell Playboy about lust in his heart.

32. Germond and Witcover, "Bert Lance."

33. Anonymous, "Waiting for Jimmy, Hopefully," Columbia Journalism Review (Jan./Feb. 1977):6.

34. Larry L. Burris, "Change in Presidential Press Conferences," Journalism Quarterly, 66 (Summer 1989):468-470.

35. Carpini, "Critical Symbiosis."

36. Carpini, "Critical Symbiosis."

37. David L. Paletz and K. Kendall Guthrie, "The Three Faces of Ronald Reagan," Journal of Communication, 37 (Autumn 1987):7-23.

38. Charles Press and Kenneth Verberg, American Politicians and Journalists (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman Company, 1988), p. 182.

39. Michael Nelson, "Why the Press Exalts Presidential Power," Media Studies Journal 8 (Spring 1994):155-162.

40. C.T. Hanson, "Gunsmoke and Sleeping Dogs: the Prez's Press at Midterm," Columbia Journalism Review (May/June 1983):27-35.

41. Carpini, "Critical Symbiosis."

42. Hanson has written that many of the leaks that characterized the Reagan era--and vexed the president himself--were due to the intense rivalries Reagan created through the "empires" he established for James Baker, Edwin Meese, Mike Deaver and William Clark. Hanson, "Gunsmoke and Sleeping Dogs."

43. Jay Peterzell, "The Government Shuts Up," Columbia Journalism Review (July/Aug. 1982):31-37.

44. Anthony Marro, "When the Government Tells Lies," Columbia Journalism Review (March/April 1985):29-41.

45. Peterzell, "The Government Shuts Up."

46. Carpini, "Critical Symbiosis."

47. Nelson, "Why the Press Exalts Presidental Power."

48. "Stranded Outside the Inner Sanctum: A Conversation with the White House Press Corps," Media Studies Journal 8 (Spring 1994):163-175.

49. Carpini, "Critical Symbiosis."

50. Timothy R. Miller and John V. Pavlik, "Year One--Presidential Coverage by the Numbers," Media Studies Journal 8 (Spring 1994):42-51.

51. Stephen Hess, "President Clinton and the White House Press Corps--Year One," Media Studies Journal 8 (Spring 1994):1-8.

52. Hess reports that Clinton told radio and television correspondents in March 1993 that he could "stiff you on press conferences" because Larry King "liberated me by giving me to the American people directly."

53. Hess, "President Clinton."

54. "Stranded Outside the Inner Sanctum."

55. "Stranded Outside the Inner Sanctum."

56. See Griffin Bell with Ronald J. Ostrow, "Dealing with the Media," in Hiebert and Reuss, Impact of Mass Media, pp. 234-245; and Jody Powell, The Other Side of the Story.

57. Nelson, "Why the Press Exalts Presidential Power."

58. "Waiting for Jimmy, Hopefully."

59. Carol H. Weiss, "What America's Leaders Read," Public Opinion Quarterly, 38 (1974):1-22; and Warren Breed, "Newspaper 'Opinion Leaders' and Processes of Standardization," Journalism Quarterly, 32 (Summer 1955):277-284, 328.

60. Blankenburg, "The Utility of Anonymous Attribution."

61. Nelson, "Why the Press Exalts Presidential Power."

62. In their bibliometric analysis of 12 major papers, Miller and Pavlik found that newsholes shrank from 1989 to 1993, with the overall number of news stories about all topics decreasing 7%. We did not, however, count the total number of stories in this study and cannot argue that a shrinking newshole did or did not account for any of the decrease observed here. See Miller and Pavlik, "Year One."

63. Miller and Pavlik, "Year One."

TABLE ONE

Named and Unnamed Sources in New York Times Stories During the First February of The Presidential Administration, by President

PRESIDENT:	Carter	Reagan	Bush	Clinton	TOTAL
PERCENTAGE OF STORIES WITH:	%	%	%	%	%
any unnamed sources	62	83	85	86	77
no unnamed sources	38	17	15	14	23
(n)	(102)	(84)	(68)	(65)	(319)
	chi-square=21.2, 3 d.f, p=.0001				
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SOURCES THAT ARE:	%	%	%	%	%
named	68	53	52	63	59
unnamed	32	47	48	37	41
(n)	(378)	(398)	(295)	(351)	(1,422)
	chi-square=26.6, 3 d.f., p=.0001				
FREQUENCY OF SOURCES PER ITEM:	f	f	f	f	f
total sources per item	3.7	4.7	4.3	5.4	4.5
unnamed sources per item	1.2	2.2	2.1	1.98	1.8

TABLE TWO

Tenor of Assertions of Unnamed Sources in *New York Times* Stories During First February of Presidential Administration, by President

	Carter	Reagan	Bush	Clinton	TOTAL
UNNAMED SOURCE	%	%	%	%	%
TENOR					
negative	29	24	18	9	20
neutral	45	63	76	78	65
positive	26	13	6	13	14
(n)	(122)	(186)	(140)	(128)	(580)

chi-square=46.7, 6 d.f., p=.001

Inability to Recognize News Source Bias and Perceptions of Media Bias

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June 15, 1995

To be presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Newspaper Division, Washington, D.C., 1995. Professors Rouner, Slater and Buddenbaum are associate professors in the Department of Technical Journalism Colorado State University. We wish to thank the students in the methodology and research classes who assisted on this project.

Inability to Recognize News Source Bias and Perceptions of Media Bias

Abstract

Some scholars and journalists would argue American journalism in the 1990s suffers from a credibility crisis. This paper examines public perceptions of the news media and the bias of news media sources, comparing newspaper employees and their audience. Using three samples, a general public sample of adults (N=245), a college student sample (N=172), and a newspaper employee sample from a local newspaper (N=28), this study found key differences between the journalism professionals and their audience relative to perceptions about news media providing balanced news and using quotes from sources to show two sides of an issue. Further, the audience differences from the professionals in the ability to perceive source bias predicted audience members' views that news media are less likely to be balanced and use two-sided quotes from sources.

Inability to Recognize News Source Bias and Perceptions of Media Bias

Some scholars and journalists would argue American journalism in the 1990s suffers from a credibility crisis (cf., Merritt, 1995). Public perceptions of bias in the news media were detected as early as the 1960s (Roper, 1969). However, trend data suggest the American public views the media as increasingly less trustworthy, paralleling--possibly surpassing--a downward slide in trust for other American institutions (Harris, 1984; American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1985).

What does it mean, specifically, when public opinion polls show an increasing distrust for newspapers, television and other news media? Do members of the public perceive the news media as out of touch, dishonest, biased? How do public perceptions correspond to journalists' perceptions? Is it part of the downward trend in trust in the media, along with other American institutions, a function of younger people's general cynicism and mistrust?

This paper explores these questions. We examine perceptions of the role of the news media and perceptions about bias, specifically in the use of news sources by public affairs journalists. Perceptions of the general public, college students, and of media personnel are explored and compared. More controversially, we propose that there is, and provide evidence for, a link between the naivete of news consumers with respect to source bias and their belief that media are biased in their news coverage.

Bias and the News Media

Although bias is viewed as an important dimension of source credibility (Hovland and Weiss, 1951, McCroskey, 1966), it is understudied. Credibility research about news media more often explores the importance of expertise as an attribute of news sources or a newspaper, or comparatively between newspaper and electronic news sources (Gaziano and McGrath, 1986; Meyer, 1988; Rouner, Brown and Day, 1993). However, Hovland and Weiss (1951) conceptualized expertise and trustworthiness as the two dominant dimensions of source credibility at the inception of social science inquiry into this topic. Even trustworthiness, however, is conceptually problematic with respect to judgments about the news media. One might expect trust in the news media to be a function to some extent of the degree to which the media are perceived to be objective or biased. Therefore, this study is concerned with perceptions of bias on the part of news media, news consumers' perceptions of bias on the part of news sources, and their possible relationship.

Some government officials and political pundits have criticized what they perceive to be a systematic ideological bias in the media, particularly the news media. Empirical evidence suggests that the "liberal bias" charge against the media is largely unfounded (c.f., Entman, 1989). Some scholars argue, however, that at certain times the American press has been more liberal or conservative, reflecting the climate of the country at the time (Bennett, 1988; Rosen, 1992; Taylor, 1992).

Psychological research has found that media bias is sometimes a mote in the eye of the beholder. In particular, researchers have found that partisan or biased individuals from both sides of a controversial issue are likely to perceive the same media coverage as biased in opposite directions (Vallone, Ross and Lepper, 1985). Gunther and Lasorsa (1986) found that greater importance individuals placed on issues led to their increasing trust of newspaper coverage on that issue. Gunther (1988), however, found a curvilinear relationship between attitude extremity and trust in media coverage of an issue, suggesting some consistency with the Vallone et al. (1985) findings.

It would be, of course, self-serving on the part of journalists to claim that news consumer partisanship is the major reason for accusations of media bias. Bennett (1988), for example, provides a typology of four types of bias in the news that causes journalism harm in the eyes of the citizenry. First, he argues that media personalize news into human interest accounts, limiting the public's ability to see the "big picture," and causing a focus on trivial aspects of important news events, like personality flaws and behavioral gaffes. Second, he argues that a drama bias causes news media to present stories that stem from events, leaving no professional convention for addressing many of the most serious problems confronting contemporary societies, like hunger, racism, resource waste and depletion. A third type of bias is information fragmentation, again making it difficult to see larger issues. Finally, Bennett describes a source bias, where news media seek out authoritative voices of officials who offer views that normalize the news for members of an average public.

Bennett's claim regarding source selection is supported by the work of a number of researchers. Most of the research on news and public affairs information bias centers on the use of selected, elite sources (Sigal, 1973; Gandy, 1982; Stempel and Culbertson, 1984; Brown, Bybee, Wearden and Straughan, 1987). Sigal (1973) suggested that reporters rely on sources who are easy to identify and access, with most front-page news in the New York Times and the Washington Post based on government sources. Brown et al. (1987) examined how elites dominate as news sources, relied on because they are readily available and thought to provide trustworthy, authoritative information in an articulate fashion. They found, similar to Sigal (1973) and others, that government sources–primarily males in executive positions–dominated.

Perceptions of News Source Bias and its Possible Relation to Perceptions of Media Bias

Accusations of systematic bias are frustrating and painful for journalists. Reporters are trained to operate under a professional code of values and ethics, where fairness and balance reign supreme (Charnley and Charnley, 1979). All the while, audiences are showing increasing signs of distrust. Some of that distrust may be due to extreme partisan positions on the part of some consumers. This, however, is hardly likely to explain a more widespread questioning of media objectivity. The structural limitations of journalism, and the patterns of sources typically used, may constrain and in some senses bias news coverage. These problems and limitations in contemporary journalism may dispose news consumers to be critical of the news media. News consumers, however, have also changed; newspaper readership is shrinking and as a consequence there may be less attentive and less expert consumers of news. It may be that there is something in the way journalists approach achieving objectivity that news consumers do not acknowledge, misunderstand, or reject.

The problem of journalistic objectivity, of course, is a particularly difficult one. The Oxford American dictionary defines objectivity as "not [being] influenced by personal feelings or opinions" (Oxford, 1980). While journalists may seek to exclude their own feelings or opinions from a story, they are dependent upon sources--who usually have such opinions--in developing the story. News stories, then, are inevitably influenced by feelings and opinions, even when not the journalists' own. Journalists, in most reporting contexts, finesse this problem through the convention of story balance. This practice may often mean purposefully seeking out biased sources to present one side's view and the other side's view. This is, of course, presented in the name of balance and fairness; it is not objective, but rather presents two biased sources' perspectives. The end goal is, presumably, neutrality. Some journalists argue this might be construed as an unusual way to present unbiased information (Merritt, 1995). Journalists may actually be relying on the most influential, active sources they can find, given the various constraints of reporting, rather than purposefully looking for a biased perspective (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987).

Clearly, there is more to the use of sources from two sides of an issue in the name of fairness and balance that leads to perceptions of bias or distrust in the news. However, as Lacy, Fico and Simon (1991) point out, fairness or balance in any given news story is typically a matter of story balance. They measured balance by determining if contact was made with someone representing the two major sides of a controversy. In their study of news stories in 21 newspapers, they found many lacked balance. In 28 percent of instances the other side of a controversy was not contacted, and no explanation was offered by the story's writer. In an additional 6 percent, no contact was made, but an explanation suggested efforts for such contact failed. They measured balance by counting the number of words presented by each side and creating an absolute difference score.

Nonetheless, the extent that the news media are to be perceived as unbiased must depend in part on perceptions of story balance, as well as the actual frequency of adequate balance in news coverage. This study concentrates on the extent and consequences of discrepancies between journalism professional's and the public's perceptions of news source bias. We define bias as a perceived attribute of a news source whereby the individual, or the group the news source represents, has a clear, vested interest in a cause or action relative to changing or maintaining the status quo. This bias is apparent knowing the person's credentials. Those credentials are presented such that one might predict how that individual would respond ideologically on political and social issues. Thus, if background information describes an individual's positions and accomplishments but that information does not in and of itself suggest a position on social or political concerns, the source is interpreted as low in bias. A highly biased source would be generally presented in a journalistic account as operating to alter the status quo in some fashion, like eliminating taxes. Source bias as a concept is continuous. Any source, no matter how it is presented, would convey some degree of bias, as in an allegiance to some group or cause, or a tendency toward action. However, for purposes of this study, a dichotomy of high and low will be used.

The Lacy et al. (1991) results suggest one obvious problem, a discrepancy between the journalistic value of presenting two sides of an issue and the actual practice of doing so. However, in this study we propose that there may also be a more fundamental problem. The success of the convention of story balance assumes that the news consumer shares the reporter's assumptions concerning the bias, or lack thereof, of the various sources cited in the study. This assumption has received little empirical examination. One recent study suggested that, at least among college students, there was very little ability to recognize and acknowledge bias among message sources (Slater & Rouner, 1993). It may well be that many members of the general public are relatively naive with respect to judging the extent of bias of news sources. On the other hand, journalists have extensive opportunity in working with news sources to experience first-hand the extent of their bias or self-interest. We might expect, then, that:

> Hypothesis 1: There will be differences in perceptions of news source bias between professionals in the news industry and a) members of the general public and b) young adults.

In particular, we might expect to find that professionals in the journalism industry will more readily attribute bias to sources with a strong probable self-interest related to the news story. The nature of the differences with respect to sources with relatively less self-interest is more problematic. On one hand, members of the public may be simply less attuned to bias judgments, and more inclined in the case of both high and low bias sources to make neutral judgments. On the other hand, members of the public may tend to assume less bias than the more experienced and perhaps more cynical journalism professionals even among relatively less apparently self-interested sources.

What might be the consequences of such a mismatch between journalist and public perceptions of bias? The problem is most easily apparent in the case of high bias sources. Story balance is achieved by offering the views of competing biased sources in counterpoint. If the bias of these sources is not well-distinguished by some news consumers, they are unlikely to grasp the nuances of story balance. Such news consumers, then, should be more likely to perceive bias in the news media. Therefore:

> Hypothesis 2: The less bias that a) members of the general public and b) young adults perceive in high biased sources, relative to journalism professionals' own judgments, the greater their perceptions of media bias.

This, of course, represents a counterintuitive prediction. In the absence of the process described above, one would expect that members of the public who tend to perceive bias in media institutions would also be quick to attribute bias to individual news sources as well. After all, such sources are also normally affiliated with social institutions, and ones with clear political and social agendas of their own

The issues around perceptions of low-bias sources are more complex. On one hand, members of the public may be, as discussed earlier, more likely to make neutral judgments about sources. On the other, they may tend to consistently perceive less bias among low bias sources as well as among high bias sources. Either case, though, might under different circumstances reduce the ability to recognize and correctly process the story balance convention. Sometimes, a low-bias source is used to provide presumably objective comment on an issue. If news consumers perceive the source as biased, then the intended effect of increased objectivity is lost. If less-biased sources are used to provide opposing viewpoints, the inability to perceive potential bias inherent in embracing a given viewpoint will interfere with acceptance of the story balance convention.

Therefore:

> Hypothesis 3: Differences between journalism industry professionals and a) the general public and b) college students in perceptions of bias among apparently less-biased news sources will be associated with greater perceptions of media bias.

Of course, all these hypotheses are based on the assumption that members of the public are more critical of the news media and have different expectations regarding the news media than do journalism professionals. These expectations and assessments are also compared in this study.

Method

Data Collection

Three samples were generated for this study, a convenience sample of N=172 students enrolled in an undergraduate journalism course at a Western University, a random sample of N=245 individuals over 18 who live in a small Western community near the university, and a mail sample of N=28 employees of the newspaper serving that community.

In November, 1993, the students responded to a call for volunteers and completed a survey instrument en masse in their classroom setting. Uninterested students engaged in an alternative activity. This yielded a 95% response rate.

Trained telephone interviewers asked nearly identical questions to the general audience sample in March, 1994, with a 67% response rate.

The same survey instrument that was used for the student sample, with a few minor changes in demographic questions, was dropped in the office mailboxes, or left with clerks for distribution, in September, 1994, at the newspaper under study. Employees used stamped return envelopes to mail the instruments back to the researchers. Two follow-up letters served as reminders for the employees to complete the surveys and were left, with additional survey instruments, in the employee mailboxes. Twenty-eight of the 72 employees responded, a 39% response rate.

Measurement

All individuals responded to a series of questions about information they get from the news media in general, from newspapers, television, radio and news magazines. First, they were asked to rank their perceived roles of journalism, with a "1" as the most important role and "5" as the least important role, using each number only once. The roles included: to entertain people, to interpret events, to make a profit, to provide neutral, unbiased news coverage, and to serve as a watchdog.

They were also asked to respond to statements regarding their level of agreement, using a Likert-type 5-point response scale that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These statements were, "I can trust the information I get from news stories," "Most news stories present issues accurately," "News stories are just that--stories. They are not factual accounts of events," "Most news stories are presented in a balanced and fair manner," "News stories usually quote at least two sources--one from each side of an issue," "Most sources quoted in news stories are knowledgeable," "Sources quoted in news stories are usually appropriate to the story," and "Most sources quoted in news stories are just trying to bring attention to themselves or to the cause they represent."

To investigate specific differences in perceptions about the use of biased sources, eight descriptions were generated as source stimuli.

Similar to experimental conditions that manipulate bias in the source credibility literature, four types of sources were described in individual paragraphs. Political, scientific, religious and business-related sources were described as either low or high in bias, depending on information provided about their allegiances, affiliations and background experiences.

Names that were used (or gender references in the telephone sample of the general public) were male, to avoid a sex bias confound. Information about the individual's affiliations and experience was included in order to convey a degree of bias for each individual.

The four high bias descriptions follow:

> A spokesperson for Capital and Class--a citizen lobby that works to change the way federal and state governments in the U.S. operate. Founded in 1970, Capital and Class is committed to developing a Marxist tradition within movements of liberation in the U.S., including the labor, anti-racist, environment, peace and women's movement.
>
> A researcher in environmental ethics at the University of California at Berkeley, who also heads the California chapter of Earth First. He has been arrested seven times for chaining himself to trees to prevent logging in old growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. He recently received a $70,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to build an art museum display commemorating the northern spotted owl.
>
> A graduate of the University of Connecticut and former $500,000-a-year investment banking executive at JBMI Financial Corporation, who was convicted of banking and securities fraud in 1990. Although he is now in prison, he devotes his time to writing on a wide range of social and economic topics. His latest book, "Taxpayers, Suckers and Free Riders," was published by the Libertarian Press.

A clergyman who is the head of mail order ministries at the Church of "What's Happening Now." He holds college degrees in marketing, mass communications and religious studies and recently wrote a book titled "Churches as Tax Dodges." His television show can be seen on Sunday mornings in Kansas City, Missouri.

The four low bias descriptions follow:

A man who was a tenured professor in international political science at Michigan State University and who is now a private consultant to U.S. and foreign government trade organizations. His areas of expertise include world population growth and environmental economics.

The chairman of the Department of Immunology at Penn State who regularly contributes to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. He has served with distinction on the boards of several different scientific organizations, including the Smithsonian Institution's Science Information Exchange.

A professor of comparative religion at Arizona State University. He is the author of more than 30 books, including "Religious Social Doctrine and New Thinking in Economics," and "That They May Speak: Voices of Religious Social Thought." He also contributed articles to *The Encyclopedia of World Religions and Religion in America*.

The chief financial officer at Brown Investments International, a publicly traded company operating in nine states and two foreign countries. He holds graduate degrees in economics and medical ethics from the University of Illinois. He has written more than 20 articles on economics and social issues and is a regular contributor to *The Journal of the American Economics Association*.

The general audience sample responded to a question that asked how biased they considered each of the eight possible sources to be, using a 7-point scale that ranged from unbiased to biased.

The students and newspaper employees reacted to six of these source stimuli, presented in random order on the instruments, by responding to a question that asked how biased they considered each of the possible sources to be. The remaining two sources were each presented in relationship to a text that the respondents reacted to. Responses included with a text are not analyzed in this study to keep bias measures consistent.

Additional questions ascertained media use patterns and demographics for the three samples. The media use questions, about which media are the most important sources for news and information, differed slightly among the three groups.

For this exploratory study, simple frequency percentages and mean comparisons were used to assess patterns of similarity and differences among the three samples. Because the professional sample is small, even the independent sample T-tests used to determine significant differences should be interpreted with caution. We are primarily concerned with patterns of difference, given the exploratory nature of this project. The more important function of the professional sample was to provide a benchmark with respect to bias assessments of the sources against which we could compare our general public and college student samples.

In order to create an index for each respondent that represented a discrepancy between public perception of bias and journalist perceptions of bias, difference scores were calculated for the perception of each source stimuli in the general public and student samples. For the high biased source stimuli, each respondent's raw score measuring the perceived bias of a source stimulus was subtracted from the mean of the journalists' assessment of the same source stimulus. This was done for the eight source stimuli. For the low biased source stimuli, the mean of the journalists' assessment of a source stimulus was subtracted from each respondent's raw score measuring perceived bias of the same source stimulus. Again, this was done for all eight source stimuli. The difference in the directions corresponds to the predicted differences in perceptions. A higher discrepancy score on a high biased source meant less bias perceived by the general public sample compared to the newspaper employee sample. For low biased source discrepancy scores, the higher the score, the more the distance between the general public and newspaper employee sample, and between the students and the newspaper employee sample.

These discrepancy scores were added to form indices of high source bias discrepancy and low source bias discrepancy for the general public and the students (Cronbach alpha coefficients: General public high source bias discrepancy alpha= .65; general public low source bias discrepancy alpha=.66; students high source bias discrepancy alpha=.62, students low source bias discrepancy alpha=.50[1].

Results

To generally describe the samples, the students were 45% male and 55% female, closely corresponding to the university population breakdown. About one-third said they were journalism majors, with 30% majoring in another liberal arts area and the remainder in hard science, agriculture, forestry, etc. Television was the preferred medium for the news (62%), with magazines the least preferred (54%).

The mean education level for the general public sample was some college, the mean age 54. Forty-five percent were male and 55 percent female, reflecting the conventional female bias of a telephone sample. The primary news source of the general public sample was listed as television for international news (73%); television for national news (74%); television for state news (34%), followed closely by their local newspaper (29%); and their local paper for local news (87%).

The newspaper employee sample (of the newspaper referred to above as the local paper) was 67% female, with an mean age of 38. The mean longevity at that newspaper was about 5 years; 34% were in news editorial positions. Twenty percent were in advertising, while 15% were in production. The mean educational level was a college degree. The medium used as a primary source for news was newspapers (64%) followed by television (29%). The medium least used as a source for news was magazines (50%).

In assessing the role of journalism in American society, the three samples showed strong similarity on their most important role choice. The most respondents (65% of the general public, 69% of the students, and 86% of the newspaper staff) selected as the most important role providing neutral, unbiased news coverage.

The only other role for which more than 10% of any of the respondents from their respective samples selected as first in importance was to interpret events. None of the newspaper employees, however, selected the interpretation of events as the most important (i.e., the number one in importance) role of the mass media. As for the student sample, 11% indicated this was the number one most important role, and 9% of the general public selected this as most important.

The student sample emphasized this role across the second and third choice, compared to the others, with 83% indicating it was either first, second or third in the five roles described. This compares to 68% of the newspaper employees and 56% of the general public who placed it in the top three positions of roles.

Regarding the role of the news media's serving as a watchdog, none of the newspaper employees indicated this role as most important (ranked 1 out of 5). However, 50% of them placed it as second in importance. This compared to 18% of the general public indicating this was the most important (ranked 1 out of 5) and 31% selecting this as second in importance (ranked 2 out of 5), with a total of 49% for the top two categories--close to the newspaper employees' 50%. A little less than 5% of the students chose the watchdog role as first in importance (ranked 1 out of 5), but 30% selected it as second in importance (ranked 2 out of 5), with only 35% reporting this in the top two positions.

The three groups were quite similar in how they ranked providing entertainment as a role of news in the mass media, which was about in the middle (3 out of 5 ranked positions).

Students were quite different in their views about the news media making a profit. While 32% of the general public and 25% of the newspaper employees placed making a profit at first, second or third as the most important role for news media, only 13% of the students ranked profiting that high. Conversely, 67% of the students ranked making as profit as last, or fifth, in importance as a role. This compared to 49% of the general public sample and 46% of the newspaper employees.

General Perceptions About News Media and News Media Sources

Turning to the respondents' general perceptions about the news media, two differences were found between the general public and student perceptions (See Table 1).

Table 1 Mean Differences Between General Public Sample and Student Sample on Statements about the News and News Sources

	Newspaper General Sample N=245		Student Sample N=172		
Source Type	mean	standard deviation	mean	standard deviation	T-score
Trust news info	2.94	1.07	3.20	.83	ns
News not factual	2.53	.60	2.19	.62	3.88**
Issues accurate	3.07	1.00	3.24	.85	1.77*
News balanced	3.09	1.03	3.10	.88	ns
Sources 2-sided	2.86	1.11	2.89	.95	ns
Sources informed	3.34	.91	3.40	.78	ns
Sources appropro	3.74	.62	3.75	.71	ns
Sources biased	3.06	.95	3.02	.87	ns

*=$p<.05$
** = $p<.01$
*** = $p<.001$

The general public was more inclined to perceive the news as just stories, not factual accounts (general public mean=2.53, student mean=2.19, t=3.88, $p<.01$), and the students were more likely to see issues presented accurately (student mean=3.24, general public mean=3.07, t=1.77$p<.05$). Otherwise, these two groups showed similar perceptions.

When comparing the general public with the newspaper employee sample, more differences resulted (See Table 2).

Table 2 Mean Differences Between General Public Sample and Newspaper Employee Sample on Statements about the News and News Sources

	Newspaper General Sample N=245		Employee Sample N=28		
Source Type	mean	standard deviation	mean	standard deviation	T-score
Trust News Info	2.94	1.07	3.43	.92	ns
News not factual	2.53	.60	1.93	.92	3.21**
Issues accurate	3.07	1.00	3.24	.85	1.77*
News balanced	3.09	1.03	3.77	.83	3.69**
Sources 2-sided	2.86	1.11	3.43	.88	2.90**
Sources informed	3.34	.91	3.46	.92	ns
Sources appropro	3.74	.62	3.82	.62	ns
Sources biased	3.06	.95	3.11	.95	ns

*=p<.05
** = p< .01
*** = p< .001

The same pattern emerged on the items about the news presenting stories, not facts (general sample mean=2.53, employee sample mean=1.93, t=3.21, p< .01) and issues being presented accurately (general sample mean=3.07, employee mean=3.24, t=1.77, p< .05).

The newspaper employees perceived the news media as more likely to present facts, not stories, and to present issues accurately.

These two groups also showed differences on the perceptions of how balanced and fair the news is and whether sources are quoted from two sides of an issue, with the newspaper employees more likely to agree with these assertions (for news balanced, general public mean=3.09, employee mean=3.77, t=3.69, p< .01; for sources are two-sided, general public mean=2.86, employee mean=3.43, t=2.90, p< .01).

In a similar fashion, the student sample differed with the newspaper employee sample on these two items, news balance and fairness and whether news stories included quotes from two sides of an issue (see Table 3) (for news balanced, student mean=3.10, employee mean=3.77, t=3.70, p< .001, for sources are two-sided, student mean=2.89, employee mean=3.43,, t=2.81, p< .001).

Table 3 Mean Differences Between Student Sample and Newspaper Employee Sample on Statements about the News and News Sources

	Student Sample N=172		Newspaper Employee Sample N=28		
Source Type	mean	standard deviation	mean	standard deviation	T-score
Trust news info	3.20	.83	3.43	.92	ns
News not factual	2.19	.62	1.93	.92	ns
Issues accurate	3.24	.85	3.24	.85	ns
News balanced	3.10	.88	3.77	.83	3.70***
Sources 2-sided	2.89	.95	3.43	.88	2.81**
Sources informed	3.40	.78	3.46	.92	ns
Sources appropro	3.75	.71	3.82	.62	ns
Sources biased	3.02	.87	3.11	.95	ns

*=p<.05
** = p< .01
*** = p< .001

Perceptions of Source Bias

Turning to the reactions to the source stimuli, indices of the low and high sources were not created for comparison across the three samples, given the low number of newspaper employees. Significant mean differences between the low and high sources within the sample groups provided evidence of concept validity for these manipulated items.

Tables 4 , 5 and 6 show the comparative means and t-tests between paired sets of the three samples. The general public and student samples showed no differences (see Table 4). However, differences were found between the general public and the newspaper employees and between the students and the newspaper employees.

Table 4 Mean Differences Between General Public Sample and Student Sample on Perceived Bias of Hypothetical Sources

	General Sample N=245		Student Sample N=172		
Source Type	mean	standard deviation	mean	standard deviation	T-score
High Political	5.08	1.60	5.08	1.83	0.00
High Scientific	5.18	1.92	5.30	1.61	.58
High Religious	5.01	1.86	5.09	1.73	.38
High Business	5.18	1.61	5.33	1.64	.79
Low Political	3.81	1.57	3.61	1.63	1.08
Low Scientific	3.44	1.67	3.31	1.63	.65
Low Religious	3.94	1.72	4.07	1.70	.64
Low Business	3.63	1.55	3.80	1.61	.89

*=p<.05
** = p< .01
*** = p< .001

Looking at how the general public and the newspaper employee samples differed on perceived bias of the hypothetical sources (see Table 5), three of the sources manipulated to appear highly biased were perceived differently by these two groups (political source: general sample mean=5.08, newspaper employee mean= 5.80, t=1.87, p< .05; scientific source: general sample mean=5.18, newspaper employee mean=6.33, t=5.53, p< .001; religious source: general sample mean=5.01, newspaper employee mean=6.22, t=4.54, p< .001). The high biased business source was not significant, but its means differed in the hypothesized direction. As predicted in Hypothesis 1, the newspaper employees perceived the highly biased sources to be more biased than the general public perceived them to be.

Table 5 Mean Differences Between General Public Sample and Newspaper Employee Sample on Perceived Bias of Hypothetical Sources

	General Sample N=272		Newspaper Employee Sample N=28		
Source Type	mean	standard deviation	mean	standard deviation	T-score
High Political	5.08	1.60	5.80	1.64	1.87*
High Scientific	5.18	1.92	6.33	.69	5.53***
High Religious	5.01	1.86	6.22	.95	4.54***
High Business	5.18	1.61	5.67	1.27	1.71
Low Political	3.81	1.57	3.10	1.67	1.83*
Low Scientific	3.44	1.67	2.62	1.16	2.89*
Low Religious	3.94	1.72	3.68	1.89	.53
Low Business	3.63	1.55	3.74	1.74	.09

*=p<.05
** = p< .01
*** = p< .001

As for low biased sources, the political and scientific sources showed differences (political source: general sample mean=3.81, newspaper employee mean=3.10, t=1.83, p< .05; scientific source: general sample mean=3.44, newspaper employee mean=2.62, t=2.89, p< .05). Here, the newspaper employees perceived the low biased sources to be significantly less biased than the general public.

As for comparisons between the student sample and the newspaper employees (see Table 6), the same pattern of findings occurred. Each of the high-biased sources except the business source were significantly different (political source: student sample mean=5.08, newspaper employee mean=5.80, t=1.78, p< .05; scientific source: student mean=5.30, newspaper employee mean=6.33, t=4.73, p< .001; religious source: student mean=5.09, newspaper employee mean=6.22, t=4.15, p< .001) . Although only the scientific low-biased source showed a difference between the two groups (student mean=3.31, newspaper employee mean=2.62, t=2.33, p< .05), all the mean differences in sources, low and high, were in the expected direction. Again, the newspaper employees showed a higher perception of bias than the student sample on the high-biased sources and a lower perception of bias on the lower-biased sources.

Table 6 Mean Differences Between Student Sample and Newspaper Employee Sample on Perceived Bias of Hypothetical Sources

	Student Sample N=172		Newspaper Employee Sample N=28		
Source Type	mean	standard deviation	mean	standard deviation	T-score
High Political	5.08	1.83	5.80	1.64	1.78*
High Scientific	5.30	1.61	6.33	.69	4.73***
High Religious	5.09	1.73	6.22	.95	4.15***
High Business	5.33	1.64	5.67	1.27	1.14
Low Political	3.61	1.63	3.10	1.67	1.30
Low Scientific	3.31	1.63	2.62	1.16	2.33*
Low Religious	4.07	1.70	3.68	1.89	.79
Low Business	3.80	1.61	3.74	1.74	.15

*=p<.05
** = p< .01
*** = p< .001

Discrepancy Between Source Bias Perceptions and its Relationship to Media Credibility

The two major differences found between the general public and the newspaper employee samples, and between the student and newspaper employee samples, were the general public and students perceived news media to be significantly less likely than the newspaper employees did to present balanced, fair news and to quote sources from two sides of an issue.

Given these findings, Hypothesis 3 was tested by regressing the indices of the perception of high source bias on these two newspaper credibility measures, balanced news and quoting two sides. Greater distance between general public and newspaper employee, and between student and newspaper employee, perceptions of source bias are represented by a positive beta coefficient in the regression analysis. In the general sample, the more distance between the perceptions of a high biased source, the more respondents perceived the news media as presenting quotes from two sides of an issue, with a beta coefficient of .29, $p < .001$ (see Table 7)[2] . Eight percent of the variance was accounted for ($p < .001$). The pattern of the remaining coefficients is in the direction of the hypothesis. These data lend support for Hypothesis 2, that the less bias members of the public perceive in high biased sources, relative to the judgments of journalism professionals' own judgments (the greater the discrepancy between members of the public and the newspaper employees), the greater their perceptions of media bias.

The same dependent variable, only for low bias source discrepancy, was regressed on presenting balanced news and quoting two sides of an issue. Results supported Hypothesis 4 (see Table 8). For the general public sample, the more discrepant the perceptions of low source bias, compared to the newspaper employees, the less likely the public perceived the news media to

Table 7 High Bias Source Predictors of Perceptions About News Media Credibility
Entries are standardized beta coefficients and significance level

Perception About News Media Credibility	Discrepancy between General Sample and News Employees (N=156)		Discrepancy between Students and News Employees N=170)	
	beta	R^2	beta	R^2
Present balanced, fair news	.14	.02	.11	.01
Present quotes from two-sides of an issue	.29***	.08***	.07	.07

*=p<.05
** = p< .01
*** = p< .001

Table 8 Low Bias Source Predictors of Perceptions About News Media Credibility
Entries are standardized beta coefficients and significance level

Perception About News Media Credibility	Discrepancy between General Sample and News Employees (N=156)		Discrepancy between Students and News Employees (N=170)	
	beta	R^2	beta	R^2
Present balanced, fair news	-.22**	.05**	-.16**	.16*
Present quotes from two-sides of an issue	-.23**	.05**	-.10	.10

*=p<.05
** = p< .01
*** = p< .001

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present balanced, fair news (beta= -.22, p< .01) and to present quotes from two sides of an issue (beta= -.23, p< .01). Thus, the greater the difference between the two groups, the greater the perceptions of media bias.

For the students, this same prediction held up relative to discrepancy of low bias sources' predicting the perception that news media present balanced, fair news (beta= -.16, p< .01). The nonsignificant finding was in the hypothesized direction.

Discussion

These results provide support for the hypothesis that members of the public, as well as college students, are less likely to discriminate between low and high bias sources. The results also generally support the hypotheses that suggest that such perceptual mismatching is associated with perceptions of news media bias.

Of course, the presence of this association cannot provide evidence that the relationship is causal. However, the fact that respondents who assessed biased sources to be relatively less biased also assessed the news media to be relatively more biased would otherwise be counterintuitive. While we by no means wish to suggest that the possible failure of the story balance convention with some consumers is primarily responsible for perceptions of media bias, these data provide at least some preliminary and provocative evidence that it may play a contributing role.

The tendency of respondents from the general public, and among college students, to fail to discriminate news source bias in the same way journalism professionals did has even broader implications for the working journalist. If a sizable percentage of news consumers are not making the same assumptions regarding the bias of self-interested news sources as is the journalist, the news story will not be interpreted as it was intended. What must the reporter or the editor do to clarify the biases of the news sources, and the implications of these biases for the story? It is important that future research clarify the extent of the problem with news story interpretation, rather than merely assuming such problems exist because of limited discrimination of news source bias. These results, preliminary though they may be, are troubling.

Unsurprisingly, the overall patterns of these results suggest that journalism employees perceive journalism more favorably than their audiences and more favorably than students, including journalism majors. Consistent with the discrepancies in perception of source bias, the general public and students did not perceive balance and the presentation of quotes showing two sides of issues as prevalent in the news media.

The finding about the role of journalism in interpreting events, with the students assigning far more importance to this role than the journalism employees or the general sample, suggests another possible problem between what the news media do and what the young readership and viewership wants or believes is important as a media role. The general public sample was particularly low on this, compared to the other two. While the general public may be complacent about the news media's remaining neutral and fair, staying out of news interpretation as much as possible, the younger news audience may see this as what is necessary and missing. Where else does one obtain interpretation? As news media may be less inclined to engage in investigative reporting, interpretation, lengthy accounts, the younger cohort of potential subscribers may see this role as especially important.

The results of this study are clearly preliminary. Results are obtained from a single location, the sample of journalism professionals is small and is not confined to people working in an editorial capacity, and the influence of news source bias perceptions not directly linked to problems in interpreting balance of actual stories.

Were the samples larger, the student sample could be broken down into journalism and non-journalism majors to see if majoring in journalism helps explain the results.

However, the results are just as clearly intriguing and provocative. If audience perceptions of news source bias are in fact often inaccurate from the journalist's perspective, the success of the story balance convention may be less certain and news consumer interpretation of stories in some cases more distorted than journalists, and journalism researchers, assume.

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Endnotes

1. These Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients are reasonable, given the method in which these indices were created. The original measures were dispersed farther in the process of creating the difference scores. Also, these scores each represent an index of four sources that are similar in bias but differ according to topic discussed.

2. Sample sizes differ here, and in Table 8, because of the complexity of creating the discrepancy indices. For the general public sample, missing values on any one variable led to a smaller sample size. Because the eight high and low bias sources were rotated in the students and the newspaper employee samples, not all respondents in each sample reacted to the same six source stimuli, and the two with text. Therefore, the student sample regression analyses used a means substitution for missing values command, thought appropriate in this exploratory study.

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Newspapers and Public Opinion.

An examination of *The Des Moines Register* and its Iowa Poll.

A paper presented to the Newspaper Division at the
Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
Washington, DC
August 1995

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ABSTRACT

Literature about newspaper representation of public opinion presents a negative view of the relationship, predicting a newspaper's news judgment might not be independent of the polls published in the paper. This hypothesis is evaluated by looking at *The Des Moines Register's* coverage of issues featured in its Iowa Poll. Only a very weak relationship was found, suggesting that either *The Register* is somehow unique or that the concerns stated in the literature are over stated.

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to the question of the news media and opinion polling critics generally hold that the union is somewhere between unsavory and unholy. The argument goes something like this. Working under the guise of "precision journalism," impatient reporters unschooled in the fine points of the scientific method create news to the detriment of both democracy and society: social conditions are distorted, the electoral process is subverted, and the effectiveness of valid opinion research is diluted in a wash of mediocrity.

Yet many good things can also be said about media polling and the media's use of opinion polls in general. The media's use of public opinion polls provides an important forum in which one variety of public sentiment can gain equal status against elite discourse. Opinion polls conducted by the news media can have a strong impact on public policy, prompting government action against social problems (Paletz et al., 1980). Media use of opinion polls also provides society with a mirror — perhaps a somewhat wavy mirror at times — but nonetheless a mirror of itself. And perhaps most importantly, at least in a political context as Traugott argues (1992, p. 130), opinion polls in the media can serve to enhance the public's sometimes flagging interest in things political.

From an effects perspective, the consequences of the media's use of polls can generally be divided between those involving effects on the public and those involving effects on politicians and the democratic process. Research presents a mixed picture in terms of effects on the public. Ideas like bandwagon, underdog, and others, have not been strongly supported by consistent empirical evidence (Gollin, 1980; Traugott, 1992). But ideas like the third person effect and the spiral of silence do suggest viable mechanisms through which media representation of public opinion can have an effect on the public (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Davidson, 1983). In any case, the impact of media polling on the public is more elusive and indirect than common wisdom, and the critics, may sometimes hold.

The effect of media polling on politicians is perhaps more tenable. Media polls can have a strong impact on the initial viability of a campaign; either enhancing or thwarting critical early financial support and volunteerism. For example, media polling has been cited as strongly influencing the selection of vice-presidential candidates (Traugott, 1992). Poll results can place positive or negative constraints on the actions of public officials. And media focus on poll results can completely overwhelm the message that a politician wishes to transmit to the electorate (Dionne, 1992).

The question of the impact of poll reporting on the public and politicians has generated an abundance of material in academic, professional, and popular publications. But largely ignored, at least in a relative sense, is the question of the impact of media opinion polling on the *media.*

POLLING AND JOURNALISM: AN OVERVIEW

Of specific interest to this article is the question of what impact newspaper-conducted opinion polls might have on the newspapers that conduct such polls. A brief overview of the history of newspaper opinion polling and a look at some of the arguments for and against the practice will preface an investigation of the relationship between *The Des Moines Register* and its Iowa Poll.

Ismach (1984) cites a series of benchmark dates in the relationship between newspapers and opinion polling. Newspaper opinion polling — as straw polling — has been traced back as far as 1824 by Tankard (1972). But the real foundation of the relationship was laid in the 1920s as newspapers began to publish the findings of Roper, Gallup, and Crossley.

It was in the mid-1940s that the *Minneapolis Tribune* and *The Des Moines Register* became the first newspapers to regularly conduct and publish their own public opinion research. The collaboration of Sid Goldish, then Minnesota Poll director, and Ralph Nafzinger at the University of Minnesota did much to establish research-quality polling at the *Minneapolis Tribune.* Nafzinger brought valuable experience from the Office of War Information that influenced not only early newspaper opinion polling but also the study of public opinion in journalism programs, first at Minnesota and later at the University of Wisconsin where he was director of the School of Journalism from 1949 to 1965 (Rogers and Chaffee, 1994).

But it wasn't until the late 1960s and early 1970s that Philip Meyer's work for Knight-Ridder, at the *Detroit Free Press* and other publications, began to more widely integrate the disciplines of social science into newspaper opinion polling. Meyer's training at Harvard and experience with Knight-Ridder led him to publish his influential work *Precision Journalism* in

1973. Thereafter, both academic curriculum and professional symposiums continued to focus on integrating the investigative skills of the social scientist into the journalist's "kit bag."

Weaver and McCombs (1980) make the argument that the relationship between journalism and social science predates the coining of "precision journalism." They see the roots of the relationship going back to the original humanistic philosophies of journalism. What they see recently is a strengthening of the ties between social science and journalism as journalism has moved away from the simple reporting of facts and toward placing news in a social context. As the social sciences became increasingly empirical so did journalism's application of social science. Noelle-Neumann (1980) prefers the phrase "*data* precision journalism" because it better captures the nature of the new relationship.

In any case, it is clear is that newspapers dramatically increased their use of opinion poll data by first publishing the results of polling organizations and later by either establishing in-house polling efforts or hiring the services of professional polling organizations. By the 1970s the opinion poll had become a highly visible fixture of the print journalism scene.

Demers (1987) replicated a 1978 study by Rippey in order to see if the established nature of newspaper opinion polling had changed in recent times. Both Rippey and Demers surveyed about 400 daily newspapers selected from the *Editor & Publisher Yearbook*. Overall, Demers found that newspaper opinion polling had not changed a great deal over the decade. He also found those papers that are polling intend to continue to do so and those that are not have no intention of starting. This shows that opinion polling has achieved stability in the profession.

Demers reports that in 1986 about 35% of daily newspapers were conducting their own public opinion polls (down insignificantly from 37%). He did find some change in how the polls were being conducted, though. There was a shift toward professionalization as newspapers moved away from conducting all aspects of polling in-house and toward using the services of outside polling firms and consultants for both data gathering and analysis. The strongest shift involved a move toward using professional survey interviewers. While this suggests an improvement in the quality of newspaper-conducted opinion polls, about half of the polling was still done on an exclusively in-house basis.

The Rippey-Demers work did not address the question of newspaper *use* of opinion polls, only the prevalence of polls conducted by newspapers. Even in the absence of empirical support, it seems very safe to say that all newspapers routinely report public opinion polls of one variety or another. In fact, it is probably impossible to go through any issue of a medium sized paper without encountering an opinion poll in some form.

Miller and Hurd (1982) did examine conformity to AAPOR poll reporting standards at three major newspapers: *Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Atlanta Constitution.* AAPOR recommends reporting size, sponsor, wording, error, population, method, and timing. Reporting poll sample size and sponsorship were the most stringently followed standards. It was found that conformity to the standards was highest for election-related polls and for polls conducted in-house. On average, the standards were employed in 58 per cent of polls reported.

Atkin and Gaudino (1984) ask why journalists have become so enamored with opinion polling. They find an answer by looking at how the opinion poll meets the general tests for newsworthiness. They paint a broad picture of "newsworthiness," admitting that there are no rules, only conventions. They cite the commonly referred to conventions of interest, consequence, proximity, timeliness, prominence, exclusivity, and the investment of a publication's resources as factors that make something newsworthy.

By these standards, Atkin and Gaudino argue, opinion polls are very newsworthy. Polls often deal with political material, containing information of interest and consequence to the audience. They can also serve to sustain audience involvement in issues. If it is allowed that public opinion is stable in the short term, then opinion polls also have a very useful shelf-life. Further, polling represents a sizable expenditure of resources so editors will feel inclined to use the results in some way. These factors are only intensified if the poll material is either exclusive or if there is a competing publication flaunting its own poll findings.

With the popularity and rationale for newspaper opinion polling given, the more important questions remain: What is good and bad about newspaper opinion polling and how does it affect news coverage?

The academic literature presents a litany of complaints against newspaper opinion polling and media opinion polling in general — and very little in its support. Ismach (1984) presents a list of eight general categories of charges against media polling. Media polls: cause bandwagon or underdog effects, fail to predict elections and thus threaten polling credibility, emphasize the trivial, influence the news judgments of editors, have low validity when they are done on the cheap, are often inappropriately analyzed by editors, and usually lack conceptual and methodological rigor.

Noelle-Neumann (1980), while allowing that journalism can benefit through the use of social scientific methods, nonetheless cautions against journalism becoming "social research in a hurry." She sees five acute areas of difficulty that must be overcome if journalists are to harness the power of the social scientific method. Journalists do not understand the concepts underlying measurement, do not see how measurement and prediction relate, and misunderstand the idea of the interview as a way to gather data. Her other cautions involve journalist's general lack of training in statistics and the specific problem with correlation and causality.

Ladd (1980) approaches the relationship between polling and journalism by considering the two as unique institutions that each have distinct characteristics that tend to defy a clean fit between the two. The news media must often work quickly, but polling is a task — like most all tasks in the social sciences — that often requires slow progress. There is also an almost unavoidable disjuncture caused by the media's need to use "tight editing." Ladd points out that tightly edited poll results are usually oversimplified poll results.

Another point of disjuncture between journalism and polling is that "good news reporting has focus and arrives at relatively clear and unambiguous conclusions. In contrast, good opinion research typically reveals such characteristics of popular thinking as tentativeness, ambivalence, uncertainty, and lack of information or awareness" (1980 p. 577). The analytical techniques applied to newspaper-conducted poll data are typically restrained to crosstabulation with limited demographic variables: techniques often inadequate to the task of discovering subtle relationships.

Syndicated columnist Nicholas Von Hoffman (1979) minces no words as he criticizes newspaper polls, charging them with one of the mortal sins of journalism: the making of news. Von Hoffman argues that it would be indefensible for journalists to use the checkbook to create a news event. Yet, according to Von Hoffman, that is exactly what journalists are doing each time they conduct an opinion poll. "The big news organizations, therefore, are making their own news and flacking it as though it were an event they were reporting on over which they had no control, like an earthquake or a traffic accident" (p. 573).

It is another working journalist, Bill Kovach (formerly *New York Times* editor now curator of the Nieman Foundation at Harvard) who offers somewhat lonely praise in the academic literature for journalists' use of opinion polling (1980). In his address to the 35th Annual Conference of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, Kovach admits to the difficulty he had in the task of recalling how things were before journalists embraced opinion polling:

> But it didn't turn out to be that simple because the polling tool has been so completely factored into our decision-making process, especially in political reporting, that I had difficulty remembering how we worked before we had this tool. How did we report the issues? How did we determine their rank and importance in electoral matters? (p. 567)

He goes on to describe the beneficial attributes of the relationship between the newspaper and opinion polling:

> As a result of polling we have, I believe, been able to more adequately examine political issues, to check our perception of the relative importance of the issues, to discover — through open-ended questions — issues that otherwise might have escaped our attention, and to test suspicions or tentative notions about public attitudes and behavior. All of these analyses have been invaluable in the allocation of limited resources. Time and again, poll results have helped us decide how and where and in what numbers to commit our reporters, and in most cases, these have been more useful, productive, and informative decisions. (p. 568)

Overall, Kovach argues that opinion poll data have helped *New York Times* reporters and editors to understand the audience, their interests, and the social world in which they live. Yet Kovach recognizes many of the criticisms leveled against media opinion polling. He admits that the horse-race has become too heated. He also admits that editors feel compelled to use their expensive poll results and sometimes tend to give in-house generated results preference over the observations of outside pollsters.

Clearly, media opinion polling is not without its pros and cons. Most of the criticism of the practice revolves around matters of a technical nature. The critics are often academic and professional pollsters who have studied public opinion and polling in great depth and have developed it to a fine and complex art. From their perspective, the newspaper-conducted opinion poll is dangerously amateurish. Is social research really another thing that journalists should be doing in a hurry? Their concern is certainly not without basis. On technical grounds, mishandled data reported as the "public's will" is a fact error of some magnitude: a misquote of societal proportions. On conceptual grounds, even the possibility that poll respondents are reacting to the *poll question* rather than reporting an actual opinion that was held before the question was asked can turn the validity of "public opinion" on its head.

But these arguments are usually restricted to the halls of the academy. The fact of the matter is that in the "real world" public opinion polls are a popular aspect of today's media environment and, despite what problems they may possess or cause, at the very least represent another voice in the rancor of public debate — another offering in the marketplace of ideas.

THEORETICAL BASIS, METHODS, AND HYPOTHESES

As Noelle-Neumann (1980) suggests, an important consequence of journalists using poll results to shape news judgment would be a partial surrender of the agenda-setting power of the media. This observation suggests a viable approach to the empirical question.

If any empirical evidence has emerged showing that media opinion polling is shaping later media coverage it has come from the area of agenda-setting. Rogers, Dearing, and Chang (1991) suggest that there was a relationship between media polling and subsequent media coverage of AIDS. And Trumbo (1995) comes to a similar conclusion through an examination of the issue of global warming.

It must be pointed out that both of these studies involve national issues with highly unique aspects — a far cry from the variety of community or state-level issue that often occupies local opinion polling. Nonetheless, agenda-setting may be a useful point of departure for the question at hand. In recent years the agenda-setting literature has been moving toward the perspective that agenda-setting operates in accordance with a general systems model. One may no longer stop with the idea that the media may be good at telling the public what to think about; the public may also be credited with the ability to tell the media what to think — or report — about (see Smith, 1987; Rogers, Dearing, and Bregman 1993; Kosicki, 1993; McCombs, 1992; Rogers and Dearing, 1988; Trumbo, 1995).

The present investigation of the relationship between newspapers and opinion polling will borrow from the systems-oriented agenda-setting tradition and allow that the typical agenda-setting hypothesis may be reversed. The generalized research question asks if the newspaper's agenda remains unchanged following an opinion poll or if it tends to move into synch with the poll results. But this investigation's operationalization of the public agenda (discussed below) falls somewhat short of the idealized concept of "salience" that is central to agenda-setting. It must therefore be emphasized that the newspaper's agenda is not being placed as a dependent variable to the public agenda — as agenda-setting would be prone to do — but the two are being examined together in an effort to look for a relationship. The causal assumption of agenda-setting is not embraced.

Returning to the focus of this investigation, we ask specifically about the relationship between newspaper-conducted polls and the newspaper. Of all the possible impacts that media-conducted polls could have on the media the most significant might be a subtle influence on the news judgment of journalists.

This begs the empirical question: is newspaper opinion polling measurably linked to subsequent newspaper news judgment? As Atkin and Gaudino (1980) observe, the literature offers only anecdotal evidence on this question. To date, there have apparently been no attempts to empirically investigate the hypothesis that the way a newspaper covers the issues is independent of the results of its own opinion polling. Judging from the nature of the commentary found in the academic literature concerning the relationship between newspapers and opinion polling, one would hypothesize that a strong and fairly easily detected empirical relationship should exist.

Reprints of news articles based on Iowa Poll results are republished annually by *The Register.* This collection was browsed for potentially interesting configurations of questions. In early 1985 *The Register* executed a round of polling to see how Iowans would vote on a set of 12 upcoming legislative items. Following the legislative action, *The Register* republished the results in a table showing how the poll results compared with the legislative results (as it turned out, passage by the Iowa Poll predicted passage by the legislature for less than half of the items). In late 1988 and early 1989 The Iowa Poll again asked a set of questions asking how Iowans would vote on 10 upcoming legislative items (they were never presented as a group with a comparison to law-maker's actions). The results of these two polls are reported in Tables 1 and 2.

In each case it is possible to create a rank order of issues from the poll results. Ranking is achieved by means of the percentage of respondents "voting" in favor of an issue, creating an index of popular support. For the 1985 case, questions were asked in the month of February. For the 1988-1989 case, questions were asked in two rounds spanning December 1988 to February 1989. This presents some non-comparability in the two cases. However, no other set of 10 questions were asked during the time frame in which an index is available for examining *The Register's* news coverage (10 are required for the statistical operations).

It must be noted that *The Des Moines Register Index* was compiled by the Parks Library at Iowa State University until June of 1992 when a full-text CD-ROM product became available for *The Register.* Unfortunately, the electronic database cannot be searched by topic, only by key word. Since the two methods are by no means comparable, this investigation was thus constrained from using poll data more current than late 1991.

The Des Moines Register Index was then consulted to acquire a story count by poll topic for the 9 months prior to and the 9 months following both poll periods. These data were broken down into cumulative 3, 6, and 9 month segments so that the time span of any relationship might be evaluated. To evaluate the relationship, Spearman's rank order correlation, rho (r_s), is calculated between the newspaper's agenda before the poll and the poll's index of support. This is then compared with the rank order correlation between the newspaper's agenda after the poll and the support ranking. For cases where more than one tie occurs in the rank ordering, Kendall's tau-b is used in place of Spearman's rho. The research question asks if there is a stronger relationship between the *Register's* agenda and the Iowa Poll after the poll. Restated, the correlation should be significantly stronger after the poll than before. Since the strengthening could be in either direction, this presents the two-sided hypothesis:

H: r_s (newspaper before poll w/poll) $\neq$ r_s (newspaper after poll w/poll)

RESULTS

It was in 1943 that *Des Moines Register* president Mike Cowles, a long-time friend of Iowa native George Gallup, initiated the Iowa Poll. Newspapers in Dallas and Austin had started the Texas Poll in 1940, but suspended their operation from 1941-1946 while the founder, Joe Belden, served in the war. This gives the Iowa Poll the distinction of being the oldest continuously-conducted state newspaper poll in the nation. The *Minneapolis Star Journal and Tribune,* another Cowles family holding, began the Minnesota Poll in 1944 (Fogarty, 1993).

The motives for starting the poll predominately revolved around marketing. In a fiftieth year retrospective on the Iowa Poll, *The Register's* Thomas Fogarty writes:

> But the chief motivation for the Iowa Poll was by no means philanthropic. It was viewed as a feature that would set *The Register* apart from other papers and boost advertising and circulation.(p. 8)

Today, the Iowa Poll is solidly grounded on the editorial side of the newspaper. The poll is currently directed by Sharon Pilmer, who came to the Iowa Poll with a background in both marketing and opinion research. She is officially a part of the marketing department at *The Register,* but works exclusively with the editorial side of the organization on matters pertaining to the poll. She works closely with Fogarty, who has been *The Register's* poll writer for the past five years. They develop and implement the questions together. A survey organization in Dubuque, Iowa, then executes the phone interviews (typically about n = 800) and returns the data to Pilmer who performs analysis and provides Fogarty with a technical report on which to base his stories. Statistical analysis generally involves cross tabulation with demographic variables and with congressional districts. Data is deposited with The Roper Center (Pilmer, 1994).

After some conferring between Pilmer and Fogarty over details, the poll stories hit the paper. There is no advance report prepared on the poll results for pre-publication newsroom circulation and the poll results are not used by any other department at the newspaper. In fact, the poll does not ask respondents if they are subscribers.

Over the past 50 years the Iowa Poll has asked Iowans a wide variety of questions. Much of the material has been in the spirit of entertainment, covering topics such as what names Iowans give to their cars, whom Iowans trust the most (God number one, the Iowa State Highway Patrol number two), or reporting that 5% of Iowans personally grieved the death of punk-rock star Sid Vicious (Cutler, 1990).

But the majority of the opinions tapped by the Iowa Poll have been political in nature. And clearly, this is the aspect of the Iowa Poll that *The Register* now enjoys most. A sizable portion of the fiftieth anniversary article published on December 19, 1993, was devoted to celebrating how the Iowa Poll was "ahead of the curve" in terms of predicting the actions of state legislators. A score-card graphic shows how that, over the years, the Iowa Poll has reported a majority of Iowans in favor of one issue or another and how some time later it was law. The plebiscitary flavor of the Iowa Poll is very real.

But what impact has the Iowa Poll had on the representation of the issues in the pages of *The Register?* The Iowa Poll represents an excellent opportunity to look for such evidence. *The Register* circulates throughout the state and, despite circulation cutbacks in the 1980s, faces little credible challenge to its motto: "The Newspaper Iowa Depends Upon." *The Register's* sole proprietorship of the Iowa Poll and its lack of a competitor eliminates a host of uncontrolled variables in the relationship between *The Register* and the Iowa Poll.

Tables 1 and 2 detail the issues over which *The Register* polled Iowans on early in 1985 and in the 1988-1989 period. This set of issues seems fairly typical of those that communities face on a regular basis: ranging from taxation, to the regulation of vice, to larger initiatives such as establishing a World Trade Center or beginning a state-sponsored lottery, to issues involving insurance, education, and government.

Table 3 presents the results of the analysis for the 1985 case. Regardless of the time span examined (3, 6, or 9 months), there is no significant correlation between ranking in news coverage and earlier poll results. During the post-poll period only one time frame achieved any generally accepted degree of significance. This correlation occurs in the 9 month frame. Taking the difference between the before and after correlation shows that only the 9 month time frame even approached statistical significance at any generally accepted level. Table 4 presents the similar analysis of the 1988-1989 case were no statistically significant relationships are found.

Had the hypothesis been directional with an alpha relaxed to .1, the difference found in the 9 month frame for the 1985 case would have achieved significance. This might have been justified considering the difficulty of achieving statistical significance with such a small n. For example, to achieve a .05 level of significance in the rank order correlations a coefficient of about .66 is required. However, to achieve the same significance for the difference between correlations the coefficient must be as high as .77 (3 observations are surrendered in degrees of freedom).

Thus, for the case of 1989, the null hypothesis of no relationship between *The Register* and the Iowa Poll cannot be rejected. Similarly for the case of 1985, the null hypothesis cannot be formally rejected. However, the nearly significant relationship observed in 1985 can be further investigated for information that might bear on the research question.

The one weak (or near) correlation is worth looking at in greater detail. Table 5 ranks *The Register's* coverage of issues for the 9 months prior to the February 1985 poll, the issues in the poll, and *The Register's* coverage for the 9 months after the poll. The inverse correlation that developed after the poll is somewhat apparent. Table 6 provides further detail concerning the change in ranking for each issue as well as the amount of coverage each issue received in the news.

It can be seen in Table 6 that the news coverage for these issues generally increased during the post poll period, as would be expected as the issues became topics in the legislative session. It is worth asking if there is any relationship between the amount of change an issue experienced in ranking and the amount of coverage it received in the news. To investigate for any such pattern, the amount of rank change in both absolute value and in directional value was correlated with the amount of coverage before, after, in total, and its difference between before and after. Two significant correlations were detected. The absolute degree of change and the number of stories before the poll correlated (r = - .61, *p* = .04), and the directional degree of change correlated with the difference between before and after poll story counts (r = . 59, *p* = .04).

Overall, according to these correlations, issues that were dynamic in affecting a change in rank order correlation (regardless of direction) were the ones that received relatively less news coverage during the 9 months before the poll. Further, issues that rose in rank are associated with issues that had a large difference in before/after poll news coverage (and vice versa). This identifies three issues that played a large role in shifting the rank correlation: local option tax, wine sales, and sales tax. They all rose in ranking after the poll and they all went from little or no pre-poll coverage to more substantial levels of coverage after the poll.

From Table 5 it can also be seen that these issues were tied in the pre-poll period. Therefore, a significant amount of the change in correlation can be attributed to tied and non-attended issues subsequently receiving news attention, breaking ties, and becoming more closely aligned to the poll ranking. Does this suggest that the changing relationship that is suggested is a statistical artifact? Not necessarily, because the correlation between coverage ranking and poll ranking after the poll is weakly significant in itself (r = -.51, *p* = .09).

DISCUSSION

Considering the content of the literature on newspapers and polling and the comments made by some journalists, the lack of a stronger relationship is somewhat surprising. This study may suggest that the problems attributed to the newspaper-poll relationship, at least with regard to news judgment, are somewhat overstated. Alternatively, *The Register* may represent an atypical case. Generalizing from the population to an individual is always risky.

But some weak relationship may in fact exist between poll results and news judgment. The sign of the correlation between the poll and the 1985 coverage is of some additional interest. The negative correlation suggests that for issues on which there was strong public support there was relatively little coverage by *The Register.* This makes some sense if recast in terms of conflict. Those issues for which there is less popular support must be the issues over which there is greater opposition and conflict. It should follow that these would then be the more salient issues for news coverage. Further, the legislature is certainly having a strong impact the news agenda. The legislative proposals for which there is less popular support should also be more contentious in the legislature and thus must also be the issues that receive greater legislative debate — which once again would garner more news coverage.

The question of how much impact the poll has in the newsroom can also be approached in a more qualitative manner. Fogarty suggests that in some circumstances the Iowa Poll does figure prominently into the news judgments at *The Register* (Fogarty, 1994). He describes how the poll recently asked Iowans if they felt the media was over-covering the O.J. Simpson affair. Resoundingly, Iowans expressed displeasure over the amount of attention being given to the celebrity trial. The Iowa Poll is a high profile item at *The Register,* so it was with some surprise that Fogarty found that the O.J. poll was being run inside of the paper rather on the front as usual. However, the paper then reduced the prominence of the trial coverage. In this case the poll was used as a conscious and direct instrument to evaluate and shape news judgment.

According to Fogarty, the effects of the poll can be most dramatic in the political arena. On two occasions Iowans found unusual candidates announcing a run for public office. In one case, a local businessman-celebrity announced for governor, in another case a plastic surgeon attempted to unseat an incumbent Congressman. In both cases *The Register* was initially unsure of how to address the viability of the atypical candidacies. In both cases they polled 800 random Iowans. As a consequence of Iowans not taking his bid seriously, the businessman-celebrity found less coverage in *The Register* , but the plastic surgeon found his campaign getting more attention because the random Iowans found him appealing as a candidate. Fogarty sums it up: "So, yes, I think there is quite a strong impact on the news coverage, depending on what we come out with on the poll" (1994).

The consequences of the poll results, especially in terms of the legislative agenda, must be felt by Iowa's law-makers as well. When not writing Iowa Poll stories, Fogarty is a political reporter for *The Register,* and is thus well placed to comment on the relationship between the Iowa Poll and the state's legislators:

> I think they do pay attention very intently. I don't think they always follow it mindlessly. But one of the things I do here is cover the legislature and I see it time and again. When we do our legislative polling I'll leave for a couple of days to write the stories, but then I'm usually right back up there [at the Statehouse] and I watch it play out. I think [the poll] does have an impact. For better or worse, it has a great impact on public policymaking. (Fogarty, 1994)

Clearly, it must be concluded from the data and other evidence presented here that a complex relationship exists between *The Register* and its Iowa Poll and that this relationship cannot be seen as being distinct from the legislative and social processes that are also tied to the relationship. A more sophisticated study might untangle the relationships in which a legislative agenda develops, a newspaper conducts a poll on that agenda, and then legislators and journalists alike take some account of the poll results as the set of public issues are debated.

CONCLUSIONS

It is important to note two limitations of this study. First, this investigation does not present a completely unclouded picture of the relationship between *The Des Moines Register* and its Iowa Poll. While a marginal relationship may exist, it cannot be separated from the effects of other unmeasured variables. In reality the news is a complex of relationships not easily influenced by a single force. For example, the amount of attention that these issues received in the legislature was not measured but must have a much stronger influence on news coverage than the results of a poll.

Second, this study does not present findings that are easily generalizable to the universe of newspapers. The Iowa Poll is somewhat atypical of all newspaper polling in that it is a regular and high profile state-wide polling operation. Most newspaper polls are done on a more sporadic basis and probably with less of a professional orientation than is the case for the Iowa Poll.

But despite these limitations, this investigation does provide some valuable empirically-based insight into one case of the newspaper opinion poll and will serve to enhance the small body of literature on this topic — a literature generally lacking in empirical investigation.

It is worth concluding this article by examining the more general and forward-looking question that underlies the pro/con debate over media opinion polling presented earlier. If the media's interest in opinion polling can be taken as a given, and if it can be similarly taken that journalists do pay some attention to their own polls, then the question remains: Can this relationship produce good journalism? While polemicists argue the good and evil of media polling it may be more constructive to ask how such polling can be used to best advantage for journalism and the communities that journalists serve. Jay Rosen offers entry into this line of thought:

> Journalists made a mistake years ago when they more or less accepted the results of polls as their working definition of public opinion. The mistake had little to do with the familiar problems involving volatility, reliability, and margin of error in polling. These are technical matters. By getting into the business of measuring public opinion, journalists abandoned their duty to improve it. This, I believe, was their mistake. (Rosen, 1992, p. 25)

Rosen argues that the greatest problem with polls and journalism involves how journalists use polls. In the name of objectivity, journalists distance themselves from the political debates within their communities by making public opinion a quantified and therefore "objective" entity. Rosen echoes the sentiment expressed by Daniel Yankelovich in his *Coming to Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World*. The critical point is that there is an important distinction between public opinion and political judgment, and that endowing opinion poll returns with the status of a community's political judgment is inadequate. Rosen offers some advice:

> Suppose, then, we understand public opinion not as a verdict, but as a process by which a political community comes to understand and debate its choices. Under this definition the press has an important task: to improve the chances that public opinion will evolve into public judgment.
>
> The real challenge in improving public opinion is not to add more information, or to grab public attention for a neglected issue. It is to encourage people to state their concerns, clarify their values, order their priorities, and appreciate the consequences of the views they hold. These improvements can only come about through the process of deliberation and debate. (Rosen, 1992, pp. 26-27)

Within this frame, the task of the media polling unit shifts from that of generating information that is presented as an objective measure of opinion to the task of generating material over which public discourse might then proceed. Rosen argues that it is important for journalists to work actively to facilitate that discourse. By taking the results of surveys back to the people for additional consideration and discussion, rather than reporting them as fact, journalism can take a step toward re-engaging itself in the life of the community and its politics.

Rosen calls this kind of involvement in community affairs *public journalism* (1994). Considering the sagging political participation and falling newspaper readership that seems to characterize this period of our democracy, public journalism may be an idea that journalism and especially journalist-pollsters should consider, if not embrace.

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Table 1. February 1985 Iowa Poll.
Issues and percentage for and against in the Iowa Poll. Legislative action is indicated: Passed or Failed.

ISSUE	pro	con	Leg.
30 day suspension drunk driving	90%	09%	F
Emergency farm loans	84	11	F
School expense tax deduction	79	16	F
Restrict public smoking	79	19	F
Raise drinking age to 21	76	22	F
Begin a state lottery	74	18	P
Sell wine in grocery stores	56	40	P
Mandatory seat belts	53	45	F
Raise gas tax to 3¢/gal.	52	46	P
Allow local option taxes	37	56	P
Increase sales tax to 5%	24	74	F
Establish a World Trade Center	23	70	P

The Iowa Poll, conducted Feb. 6-21, 1985, asked the following: Following are several proposed laws that the Iowa Legislature is considering. For each proposal, tell me if you favor or oppose it. Restrict smoking in restaurants and other public buildings to certain areas. Raise the gasoline tax by 3 cents a gallon to help fund highway repair and construction. Require automobile drivers to fasten their seat belts. Allow the sale of bottled wine in private stores. Raise the drinking age from 19 to 21. Allow cities and counties to levy local sales or income taxes. Increase the state sales tax from 4 to 5 percent. Require 30-day suspension of driver's license upon arrest for drunken driving. Allow a state income tax deduction of up to $1,000 for each child in kindergarten through 12th grade. Should Iowa state government help farmers obtain loans so they can afford to plant crops this spring? Do you favor or oppose a state-operated lottery in Iowa?

The Iowa Poll, directed by Glenn Roberts, is based on 801 interviews with Iowans 18 years of age or older. Professionally trained interviewers contacted households with telephone numbers randomly selected by a computer, eliminating interviewer's choices in selecting persons to be interviewed.

Percentages based on the full poll sample are subject to a maximum margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points (from the Des Moines Register).

Table 2. Dec. 1988 - Feb. 1989 Iowa Poll.
Issues and percentage for and against in the Iowa Poll. Legislative action is indicated: Passed or Failed.

ISSUE	pro	con	Leg.
Require decomposable trash bag	93%	05%	F
Unisex insurance	86	12	P
Campaign spending reform	84	12	F
Raise state's minimum wage	78	19	P
Tax on reusable containers	76	22	F
Renew the state's lottery	72	19	P
Mandatory health insurance	70	26	F
Open enrollment	59	34	P
Allow riverboat gambling	47	49	P
Reorganize university programs	41	45	F

The Iowa Poll, conducted Dec. 5 - 13, 1988, asked the following: Currently there are no limits on how candidates for public office can spend campaign funds. Should the state set limits? Without any action by the Legislature, the Iowa lottery will end in 1990. Do you think the Legislature should extend the lottery? The state Legislature will consider plans to reorganize the three state universities to reduce duplication. Critics say this will hurt the academic quality. Would you favor or oppose reorganization? To protect the environment and to increase corn sales, the state Legislature will consider a proposal to outlaw the use of plastic garbage bags that don't dissolve in landfills. Instead, the Legislature will require the use of bags made from cornstarch that will dissolve in the environment. Would you say you favor or oppose this proposal? (from the Des Moines Register)

The Iowa Poll, conducted Feb. 27 - March 8, 1989, asked the following: Do you favor or oppose requiring all employers in Iowa to provide health insurance for their workers? Do you favor or oppose adding a 1-cent tax to every container of pop and beer to create a fund to protect Iowa's environment? Do you favor or oppose requiring insurance companies to treat men and women equally in the rates they pay for insurance? Do you favor or oppose legalized riverboat gambling on the Mississippi River along Iowa's border? Do you favor or oppose raising the state's minimum wage? Would you favor or oppose an open enrollment plan that would allow parents to send their children to the public school of their choice? (from the Des Moines Register)

Table 3. Rank Correlations Before and After February 1985 Iowa Poll.

Utilizing 3, 6, or 9 month time frames (cumulative), rank correlations are calculated between amount of the *Register's* coverage and the poll ranking (by percentage favoring issue). Due to ties, Kendall's τ_b is used for all before correlations, and Spearman's rho for all after correlations. Significance for the difference in the before and after correlations are then calculated. All tests are two-tailed.

	9 month frame / sig.		6 month frame / sig.		3 month frame / sig.	
Before	.02	n.s.	.14	n.s.	- .08	n.s.
After	- .51	$p = .09$	- .48	$p = .11$	- .29	n.s.
Difference	.53	$p = .13$	.62	n.s.	.21	n.s.

Table 4. Rank Correlations Before and After Dec. 1988 - Feb. 1989 Iowa Poll.

Utilizing 3, 6, or 9 month time frames (cumulative), rank correlations are calculated between amount of the *Register's* coverage and the poll ranking (by percentage favoring issue). Due to ties, Kendall's τ_b is used for all before correlations, and Spearman's rho for all after correlations. Significance for the difference in the before and after correlations are then calculated. All tests are two-tailed.

	9 month frame / sig.		6 month frame / sig.		3 month frame / sig.	
Before	.12	n.s.	.02	n.s.	.07	n.s.
After	.13	n.s.	- .12	n.s.	- .16	n.s.
Difference	.01	n.s.	.14	n.s.	.23	n.s.

Table 5. Significant Rank Order Correlations: Issues

Ranking of issues for Register coverage in 9 months before and 9 months after February 1985 Iowa Poll (% favoring). Rank of 1 is greatest coverage or most in favor. * indicates sets of ties.

rank	Before	Poll: Favoring	After
1	State Lottery	Drunk driving	State lottery
2	Farm loans	Farm loans	Trade center
3	Trade center	School tax cr.	Local option tax
4	Seat belts	Public smoking	Farm loans
5	Drunk driving	Drinking age	Sales tax
6	Drinking age	State lottery	Wine sales
7	*School tax cr.	Wine sales	Gas tax
8	*Gas tax	Seat belts	Seat belts
9	**Public smoking	Gas tax	Drunk driving
10	**Sales tax	Local option tax	Public smoking
11	***Local option tax	Sales tax	School tax cr.
12	***Wine sales	Trade center	Drinking age

Table 6. Change in rank, number of stories by issue.

For 9 months before and after February 1989 Iowa Poll, taking ties into consideration

change in rank		number of stories		
change	ISSUE	before	after	total
+8	Local option tax	0	43	43
-6	Drinking age	7	2	9
+6	Wine sales	0	21	21
+5	Sales tax	1	22	23
-4	Drunk driving	10	7	17
-4	School tax credit	3	4	7
-4	Seat belts	12	8	20
-2	Farm loans	25	25	50
+1	Gas tax	3	18	21
+1	World Trade Center	21	78	99
-1	Public Smoking	1	6	7
0	State Lottery	41	148	189
		124	382	506

INTERCITY COMPETITION AND LOCAL ELECTION COVERAGE: A CASE STUDY

by

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Prepared for presentation at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual meeting, Washington, DC, August, 9-12, 1995

ABSTRACT

That competition in media markets enhances the political information available to the public is a widespread assumption. Yet empirical findings on the effect of competition on content are ambiguous. This paper reports findings from a case study of "umbrella" or intercity competition, and its effect on state legislative and congressional election coverage. The paper concludes that umbrella competition may cause an increase in local political coverage initially, but this coverage may quickly taper off; and that papers may respond differently to umbrella competition.

INTRODUCTION

A widespread assumption of both communications scholars and policy makers is that vigorous competition among news media firms enhances the political information available to the public. Indeed, telecommunications deregulatory measures are now making their way through Congress premised in part on this assumption. However, few empirical studies of the effect of media market structure on news content have been conducted. Those that have provide conflicting findings, seldom consider political news content in any detail, and fail to take into account contemporary media market structure.

This paper examines the impact of "umbrella" or intercity newspaper competition on local election coverage in a major metropolitan area. The umbrella model holds that newspaper competition is more likely to occur across rather than within circulation "layers." The paper will first review the current literature on newspaper competition and content, and discuss the umbrella model of newspaper market structure. It will then present findings from a case study of umbrella competition. The paper concludes that newspapers engaged in umbrella competition may increase coverage of local politics initially, but this attention may taper off as time goes on; and that different size papers may respond differently to umbrella competition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Newspaper monopoly and democratic politics

The declining number of newspaper markets in which there exist competing dailies has been a concern of policy makers and students of political communication for decades. It is assumed that market concentration in the newspaper industry reduces the amount of political views and opinions available to the public.

As Lacy and Simon (1993) explain, the "underlying assumption is that the utility a community receives is positively correlated with the number of ideas and bits of information available. . . . If one newspaper closes, the supply will decline because the amount of information and opinion material produced by a surviving newspaper is less than that provided by two competitive newspapers" (p. 224-225). This assumption is not only evident among social scientists and economists studying political communication, but among communications policy makers as well. The Newspaper Preservation Act, which suspends antitrust laws to sustain independent editorial voices in some markets, is based on the assumption that two competitive newspapers provides readers with more and better quality news and information than a single, monopoly paper.

Despite the vigor with which policy makers and the judiciary have attempted to preserve newspaper competition on democratic grounds, the empirical evidence supporting the assumed relationship between competition and newspaper content is mixed. The research to date has found that competition between newspapers results in more space for local news, and more pictures and opinion columns (Rarick &

Hartman, 1966). Competition also seems to spark increased investment in a newspaper's editorial component. Newspapers facing competition were found to spend more money on wire services and staff reporters, have a larger news hole, and devote more space to color and photographs (Litman & Bridges, 1986). However, another study attributed the increased use of wire service copy in part to a decline in the number of newspapers (Donohue & Glasser, 1978). And newspaper competition was found to exert an influence on the competitiveness of election campaigns (Vermeer, 1995).

Other marketplace or "system" characteristics have been found to exert an influence on newspaper content. Donohue, Olien and Tichenor (1985) found that increasing pluralism or diversity in society was associated with an increase in the amount of conflict reporting in Minnesota newspapers.

But other studies show less support for faith in a competitive marketplace. Using data on 91 papers, Entman (1989) found that "competition fails to exert much influence" on the diversity of opinion, seriousness, fairness and responsiveness of news coverage (p. 96). Similarly, McCombs (1988) examined two newspapers under both competitive and monopoly situations and found few "significant content differences" (p. 136). And Weaver and Mullins (1975) found little difference between papers in competitive situations, suggesting that competing papers duplicate rather than diversify content.

McCombs (1988) argues that the reason competing mainstream newspapers do not look much different than monopoly papers is that all news organizations share identical "professional values, beliefs, and practices" (p. 136). Therefore, regardless of the competitiveness of the market, the news product will look pretty much the same across publications.

Aside from the inconclusiveness of findings in this area, research on market structure and political news suffers from two other limitations. First, few studies focus on *political* news content in any detail. Rather, most studies, including those reviewed above, examine broad content categories such as local news, human interest news, sports, business and advertising. Other studies examine indirect measures of content such as the size of the news hole, the amount of staff versus wire copy, and the financial investment in editorial resources. Therefore, the bulk of empirical evidence accumulated to date has little direct relevance to questions posed by democratic theory. These questions include: What is the impact of market structure on the supply of competing opinions about political races and issues? How are market characteristics related to the amount of coverage afforded to different types of political news, like policy positions, the political horse race, scandal or candidate personality? And how does the relationship between political districts and media market boundaries influence coverage? These questions and no doubt many more directly relevant to concerns about democracy and information are still very much in need of empirical investigation.

Part of the reason for this is a reluctance among scholars to define and measure content "quality." Indeed, judging whether political information produced by the media is "better" in some market situations than in others is a risky business. Entman and Wildman (1992) identify two schools of thought in the debate over content quality. The "market economics" school, informed by traditional economic theory, argues that quality is best measured by consumer demand; that is, those media products that do best in the

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market are assumed to be best for the "marketplace of ideas." The "social value" school, on the other hand, contends that content quality is that which serves a general "public interest." Public interest for this school is not an aggregation of individual consumer demands, but rather, a community goal derived from deliberation among citizens. Failure to reconcile these points of view has led many scholars studying media to avoid using content measures that explicitly require normative justifications.

The second limitation of the literature is that few studies operationalize competition in a way that accurately reflects current newspaper market structure. Much of the research that has been done on competition and content compares differences between papers that are engaged in direct newspaper competition and those that are not. Direct competition refers to "face-to-face competition of newspapers of general appeal located in and identified with a single city" (Rosse, 1980). But most media scholars agree that the bulk of competition between newspaper firms now occurs between papers not located in the same city nor occupying similar circulation "layers."

The decline in direct newspaper competition has been well-documented (Lacy & Simon, 1993; Bagdikian, 1992; Rosse, 1980; Rosse & Dertouzos, 1979). But coinciding with this decline has been an increase in the number of suburban and satellite city dailies which are taking advantage of population shifts from center cities to outlying areas. This trend has received less scholarly attention. In 1980, Rosse concluded that since these satellite city and suburban markets tend to be small, these papers seldom encounter direct competition. However, the increasing ability of large papers to target specific groups of readers through zoning has enabled them to compete in these smaller markets. This "umbrella model" of newspaper competition will be discussed below.

Newspaper market structure and umbrella competition

Newspaper market concentration is usually not the result of illegal mergers and unfair market practices. Rather, the decline of newspaper competition has its roots in the economics of the industry itself. Most media markets, newspaper markets included, are characterized by economies of scale which are marked by declining average costs; that is, the average cost of producing each unit of a product declines as more units are produced. So, the more pages and/or copies of a newspaper that are produced, the cheaper the cost of producing each individual page and/or copy becomes. Economies of scale encourage newspaper firms to increase circulation.

The result, as Owen (1975) concludes: "Large newspapers will tend to drive out smaller ones; two smaller newspapers can both gain by merger" (p. 17). Economies of scale exist in markets where one or a few firms can service the market more efficiently than many firms. But what is the relevant market for newspapers? As Owen points out, if economies of scale were the only factor determining the shape of newspaper markets, theoretically we would expect one national (or even global) newspaper. This clearly is not the case.

Several factors counteract the expansive influence of scale economies. First of all, the demands of advertisers and readers are localized. Readers demand local news and advertisers demand local audiences who live and shop in the areas in which they sell their products. Also, attracting a larger readership requires a higher quality product, which requires an increased investment (Owen, 1975). While the average cost of producing the first copy of a newspaper may decline as circulation increases, a higher investment in that first copy may be necessary to attract additional readers.

Thus, in the United States, newspaper markets tend to be limited geographically to areas that are meaningful to subscribers and advertisers. The competing influences of economies of scale on the one hand, and a demand by both readers and advertisers for geographically specific products on the other, explain the current multi-layered structure of American newspapers. The umbrella model of newspaper competition illustrates this phenomenon.

The United States newspaper industry is made up of several layers of papers which include large national publications like *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the national edition of the *New York Times*; large regional papers, like the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Philadelphia Inquirer*, medium-sized, small city and suburban dailies; and local weekly papers. This market structure has been referred to as "umbrella competition" (Rosse & Dertouzos, 1979). The model gets its name from its most common illustration, which resembles layers of umbrellas of decreasing size.

Rosse and Dertouzos (1979) argued that due to the existence of scale economies, newspapers are more likely to differentiate their products to appeal to different audiences rather than compete directly. As they explain, "survival of newspaper firms depends on each being able to whittle out a profitable audience segment" (p. 444). Even large regional or national papers can be thought of as serving "local" communities. The only difference between the *New York Times* national edition and a small, satellite city daily newspaper "is the size of the local community in which each happens to be located" (p. 445).

Rosse's model suggests that, despite a decline in direct newspaper competition--that is, competition within layers--newspapers may compete with those in other layers. One way competition can occur between layers is through "zoning." Most metropolitan dailies with suburban or satellite city circulation print different editions of their paper, or special sections, with news specific to those areas. Zoning is an attempt by a single paper to satisfy a segmented and geographically dispersed audience while still taking advantage of economies of scale.

A few empirical studies have investigated the "umbrella model" theory. In a study of competition among Southern California dailies, Tillinghast (1988) found that intercity competition led to shifts in circulation and advertising. Lacy and Sohn (1990) tested the assumption of substitutability by comparing circulation-content correlations of metropolitan dailies and suburban non-dailies. They found weak support for this hypothesis. Finally, Lacy (1988) found that suburban newspapers competing with larger metropolitan dailies tend to respond by increasing their news hole as well as local news coverage.

The umbrella model suggests that those testing content effects by examining the few remaining cases of direct newspaper competition may be looking in the wrong place. To examine the effect of umbrella competition on content, one has to examine the content that reaches readers where the circulation zones of newspapers occupying different circulation layers overlap. This often occurs between zoned editions of central-city papers and their smaller, satellite-city competitors. Recent developments in the suburban Chicago newspaper market provide a unique opportunity to examine political news content before and after the onset of umbrella competition between a major metropolitan and a satellite city daily newspaper.

DATA, METHODS AND HYPOTHESES

How would we expect the umbrella model of competition to affect the coverage of political news? Umbrella competition occurs when larger newspapers "invade" the circulation zones of smaller newspapers. To attract readers from these smaller markets, larger papers must increase the amount of coverage of that local area. We would expect this increase to include coverage of local politics, since, as mentioned above, newspaper markets for circulation are defined by "local community interests" (Rosse and Dertouzos, 1979, p. 444).

It is also important to point out that we would expect this increase at least to some degree by *both* papers involved in competition. Since both are vying for the same local audience we should expect a similar emphasis in their coverage of local news. In economic parlance, the products should be *substitutable.* It is not clear what degree of similarity among media products is necessary for them to be considered good substitutes. Unlike other products, which are assumed to be differentiated on the basis of price, media products are differentiated on the basis of content. In cases of umbrella competition, larger papers moving into a smaller paper's market must attract readers "by being a substitute for the local paper, while differentiating itself with more news about areas outside the local market" (Lacy, 1988, p. 400). Just what mix of local and non-local news is necessary most likely varies from market to market.

Amount of coverage is only one way newspapers appeal to reader interest. The prominence with which news stories are played is also an indication of their importance. We might expect, then, for newspapers involved in umbrella competition to increase the prominence of local news coverage through story placement (front or inside page), and the use of photographs and graphics to call attention to stories.

Three hypotheses concerning the relationship between umbrella competition and the coverage of local politics can be drawn from the preceding discussion. These are:

H1: Umbrella competition will result in more coverage of local politics.

H2: This increase in coverage will be similar across all papers involved in the competition.

And finally,

H3: Umbrella competition will result in more prominent coverage of local politics.

In January 1991 the *Chicago Tribune* opened its Northwest bureau, a regional news office covering some of the city's most rapidly growing and affluent suburbs. News produced by the bureau appears primarily in the *Tribune's* "Metro Northwest" section, one of the seven zoned metro sections of the paper. The circulation zone of the Northwest Edition--which in 1994 had a daily circulation of 83,840--overlaps the circulation region of the *Arlington Heights Daily Herald*, a satellite-city daily newspaper. The *Daily Herald's* 1994 circulation was 134,495. However, in the circulation area that overlapped with the *Tribune's* Northwest Edition--suburban Cook County, Illinois--the *Daily Herald* had just over 70,000 subscribers.

This study focuses on coverage of state legislative and congressional elections. Election coverage was chosen for both practical and conceptual reasons. First, election coverage occurs in a relatively condensed period of time, making data collection somewhat easier than considering political news during non-election periods. Second, the campaign season is one of the periods when the need for political information is highest. Thus, it is an ideal period to study the adequacy of political news coverage.

Data was collected from four general election years--1988, 1990, 1992, and 1994. This provided two years of data preceding the introduction of the *Tribune's* bureau, and two years after. It also ensures that both the pre-competition and competition periods included a presidential election, which has been found to affect the amount of coverage of some smaller district elections (Kahn, 1991).

From one month prior to each November general election through the day after the election, all stories on Illinois State Senate, State House, and congressional districts falling within the area of competition between the two newspapers were coded.[1] These different types of political districts were chosen to see how, if at all, umbrella competition impacts differently on coverage of districts of varying size. Previous studies of news coverage of elections has found that district size and fit with media markets influences the amount of news coverage districts receive (Goldenberg and Traugott, 1987). Also, differences in coverage of various districts provide a test of the second hypothesis. A similar response to competition by both newspapers would mean similar attention to the different districts considered here.

Two categories of data were recorded. "Coverage amount" was measured as the number of paragraphs on districts of interest for each election period. "Coverage prominence" was measured by recording the various types of design and graphic elements associated with stories.

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[1] Any story mentioning either candidate or the specific district was coded. If a story included information on more than one race, only that portion of the story explicitly dealing with the race or races of interest was coded. Most of the state legislative districts considered here fell completely within the overlapping circulation zones of the two newspapers. State Senate districts, which are twice as large as State House districts, were more likely to be partially included in the area of competition. No Congressional district fell completely within the circulation zone of both papers. The Congressional districts used in the analysis, however, did have large portions of their jurisdictions falling within the area of competition.

FINDINGS

Figures 1 and 2 in the appendix show support for the first hypothesis, that umbrella competition will result in increased coverage of local politics. Figure 1 shows the number of paragraphs appearing in the *Chicago Tribune* about each type of district in the various electoral periods. Remarkably, only 1 paragraph of text was written about a Northwest suburban race in 1988. The coverage was afforded to a congressional race. No stories contained information about suburban legislative races that year. The amount of coverage increases slightly in 1990. After the introduction of the *Tribune's* Northwest bureau, coverage of all districts more than doubles. Coverage is less in 1994 than in the preceding election period, but is still higher than in either pre-competition period.

Figure 2 shows *Daily Herald* coverage. It shows a similar pattern to Figure 1, but with much larger frequencies in all categories of coverage. The *Daily Herald* responded to the presence of the *Tribune* bureau by dramatically increasing coverage of local elections, state legislative races in particular. Like *Tribune* coverage, *Daily Herald* coverage declines in 1994, but is still higher than coverage in either pre-competition period.

The second hypothesis—that both papers involved in umbrella competition will show similar increases in coverage—is less well-supported. As can be seen from Figures 1 and 2, the papers did not provide similar amounts of coverage of local news, and they emphasized different types of districts.

Tables 1 and 2 show the results from a crosstabulation of political district with election year, for each newspaper. A chi-square statistic was calculated to test for the significance of the relationship between the two nominal-level variables.[2] The tables show the same frequencies depicted in bar chart form in Figures 1 and 2. They also show column percentages, which more clearly reveal which political districts were given more coverage by each newspaper.

Both the *Tribune* and *Daily Herald* afforded more than half of their coverage to state House of Representative races in 1990. Much of this coverage concerned an unusually competitive race for a single House seat. The *Daily Herald* continued to emphasize state legislative races after the introduction of the *Tribune* bureau. The *Tribune*, however, devoted most of its 1992 coverage to congressional races, and its 1994 coverage to State Senate and congressional races. State House races became less and less a part of *Tribune* coverage.

Mixed support also was found for the third hypothesis, that umbrella competition will result in more prominent coverage of local politics. An analysis of various graphic and design techniques used to give more prominent play to stories suggests that, although running a smaller amount of coverage, the *Tribune* was more likely after competition to increase coverage prominence. The effect of competition on *Daily Herald* election coverage prominence is less clear.

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[2] Chi-square provides a test of the independence of nominal-level variables. It assumes that if the variables are independent—which is the null hypothesis—cases will be evenly distributed throughout the cells of the table. If the actual distribution is significantly different from this expected distribution, then the null hypothesis of independence is rejected and it is assumed the two variables are related.

Tables 3-10 show crosstabulations of several design characteristics with election year. Data were collected on the following design characteristics: the use of photographs with stories; the use of graphics, most often district maps or eye-catching "logos" that identified the story with the paper's continuing election coverage; story location, on the front page, inside the front section, on the front of the second section, or inside the second section[3]; and whether the story "led" a section front. [4] Clear changes in prominence are evident in *Tribune* coverage after introduction of the Northwest bureau along all dimensions. *Tribune* coverage after competition began was more likely to be accompanied by a photograph or graphic, and more likely to be placed on a section front or lead the page of a section front. *Daily Herald* crosstabulations do not show patterns that suggest content effects of competition. While more coverage appeared after introduction of the *Tribune* bureau, that coverage was less likely to be accompanied by a photograph or graphic than in 1988. Coverage location and the likelihood of coverage to lead a section front also show no clear relationship to competition.

The data on prominence also are relevant to the second hypothesis. They suggest that the *Tribune* responded to competition more by increasing the prominence of coverage, than by increasing the amount. The *Daily Herald*, on the other hand, increased the amount of coverage dramatically, but did not substantially increase the prominence of this coverage.

Determinants of election coverage

The nominal-level analysis above suggests that umbrella competition does indeed effect local election coverage. But this analysis does not control for a number of electoral factors which also could be responsible for an increase in coverage. For instance, previous studies have found that the competitiveness of election races and the number of open seats also impact news coverage (Goldenberg & Traugott, 1987). Nor does the prior analysis identify the independent effect of newspaper competition on the amount of coverage afforded to political races.

To address these questions, the number of paragraphs written on each political race was regressed on competition and a number of control variables. The unit of analysis was the political race. Competition was operationalized as a dummy variable, with 1 representing an election year occuring after the introduction of the *Tribune* bureau, and 0 representing an election year before. Control variables included the competitiveness of the race, operationalized as the percentage of the vote going to the winner; a dummy

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[3] Second section refers to the *Tribune's* "Metro Northwest" section after competition; its "Chicagoland" section before competition; and the *Daily Herald's* "Neighbors" section during both periods. These sections contained much of the local news for both papers.

[4] The lead story was determined by headline size and placement, either across the top of a section front page or in the "drop-right" position, which means occupying the two right most columns of the page. If no story in one of these positions had a dominant headline, no lead story was chosen for that page.

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variable indicating whether the race was for an open seat; and whether the race was for a state house, state senate or congressional seat.[5]

Tables 11 and 12 in the Appendix show the results of the regression analyses. For the *Daily Herald*, umbrella competition is shown to have a statistically significant impact on coverage after other factors are controlled for. As the regression coefficient for competition indicates, stories appearing after introduction of the *Tribune* bureau tended to receive about 33 more paragraphs of coverage than stories in the pre-competition era. And according to its beta, competition was the second strongest variable in the equation, behind electoral competitiveness. All variables showed an impact in the expected direction. Since competitiveness of race was operationalized as the winner's percentage of the total vote, it is inversely related to the amount of coverage. The regression equation explained 54 percent of the variance in *Daily Herald* coverage.

Umbrella competition and the competitiveness of races also exerted a significant impact on *Tribune* coverage. But this impact was less statistically significant and less powerful than it was for the *Daily Herald*. In fact, the regression equation for the*Tribune* provides a much less adequate explanation of coverage, with an R-square of .20. Clearly, other factors not accounted for in the equation were responsible for much of the *Tribune* coverage. Another surprise from the *Tribune* analysis is the direction of the effect of open elections. It was expected that open seats would receive more coverage than seats with incumbents, a tendency that has been demonstrated in numerous studies of election coverage. For the *Tribune*, however, races for open seats tended to receive somewhat *less* coverage than seats with incumbents. One can only speculate as to why this was the case. Perhaps, races between political newcomers only enhance the amount of news coverage in major regional papers like the *Tribune* when the political jurisdiction being contested is large. For smaller local districts, the ignonimity of novice candidates may further decrease, rather than enhance, the race's attractiveness to readers of large, regional papers.

DISCUSSION

This analysis suggests several tentative conclusions and areas for further investigation. First, this study suggests that umbrella competition does indeed affect political news content. It appears that newspapers engaged in umbrella competition will respond, at least initially, by increasing the amount of coverage they afford to local political news. However, both papers studied here reduced their coverage of local politics after an initial high point which immediately followed the onset of competition.

Newspapers, then, may enhance local coverage as an immediate response to competition, but eventually return political coverage to pre-competitive levels. An analysis that considers more election periods than those studied here as well as responses to competition in different markets is needed to determine whether content increases due to competition are sustained, or quickly trail off.

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[5] Type of race was entered as a set of dummy variables, with state house race serving as the base variable.

Second, this study suggests that while newspapers involved in umbrella competition may increase the overall amount of local political coverage, they may emphasize different types of political districts. It has been demonstrated elsewhere that news media organizations serving large markets tend to pay more attention to large political districts that are congruent with their market boundaries (Campbell et al, 1984; Goldenberg and Traugott, 1987; Stewart and Reynolds, 1990). Also, it has been suggested that large newspapers "invading" a smaller paper's market must provide enough local coverage to be considered a good substitute. *Tribune* coverage after introduction of its bureau can be explained as an attempt to satisfy both of these demands.

By emphasizing congressional and Illinois State Senate districts, the largest of the three types of districts considered here, the *Tribune* may have been able to better take advantage of economies of scale while at the same time increase its appeal to a local audience. Despite their size, congressional and State Senate districts still might be considered matters of local interest to Northwest suburban readers. However, all of the congressional districts and some of the Senate districts fell only partially within the overlapping circulation zones of the two papers. It is reasonable to assume that the same congressional and State Senate stories appearing in the Northwest Edition may have been used in other *Tribune* editions which overlapped portions of these districts. A more extensive analysis, which examines content for all zoned editions of major metropolitan dailies like the *Tribune*, is needed to see exactly how larger papers balance the demand for local news in zoned regions with the pressures to attract large audiences.

Finally, this study suggests that design and graphic elements also are used as a response to umbrella competition. Combining local election coverage with attractive visual elements as well as packaging coverage to emphasize its importance are ways that newspapers can appeal to local readers. Although, as was the case with the amount of coverage, it appears that papers may use prominence as a strategic response to competition to varying degrees. In this study, the large metropolitan paper, while showing less of an increase in the amount of local election coverage, was more likely than its smaller competitor to increase the prominence of coverage after competition began. Unfortunately, the reasons for this difference are not apparent from this study. Perhaps limitations on space available for zoned coverage would force a center-city daily to rely more on prominence than amount of coverage to attract local readers.

In general, this case study provides evidence that readers who live in markets where umbrella competition takes place have available to them more, and more prominent news about local political elections, at least for a time. Assuming that more is better, this bodes well for the relationship between the free market and democratic politics. However, any such conclusion would be premature before more extensive measures of political news content can be examined across numerous media markets.

APPENDIX

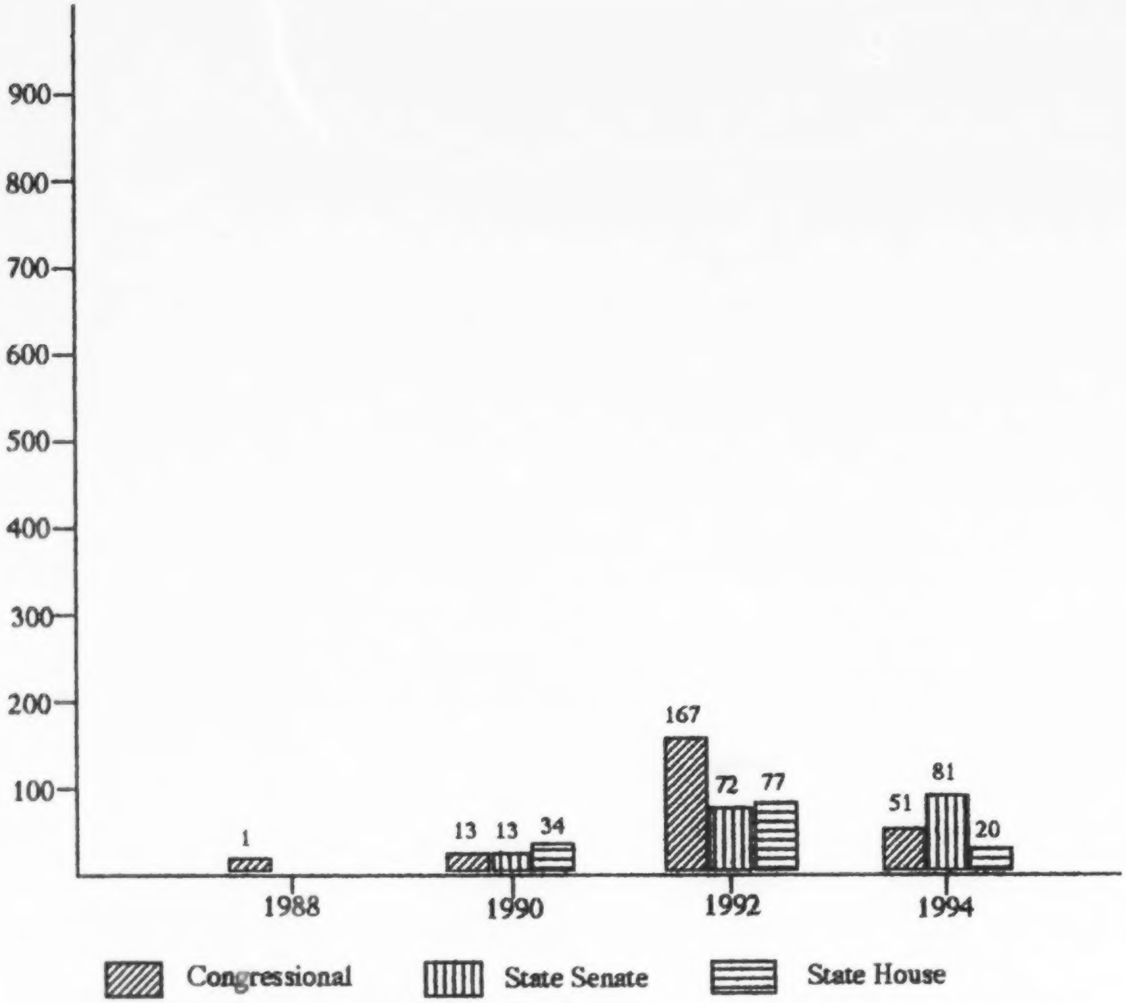

Figure 1: Number of paragraphs on Congressional and State Legislative races appearing in the *Chicago Tribune*.

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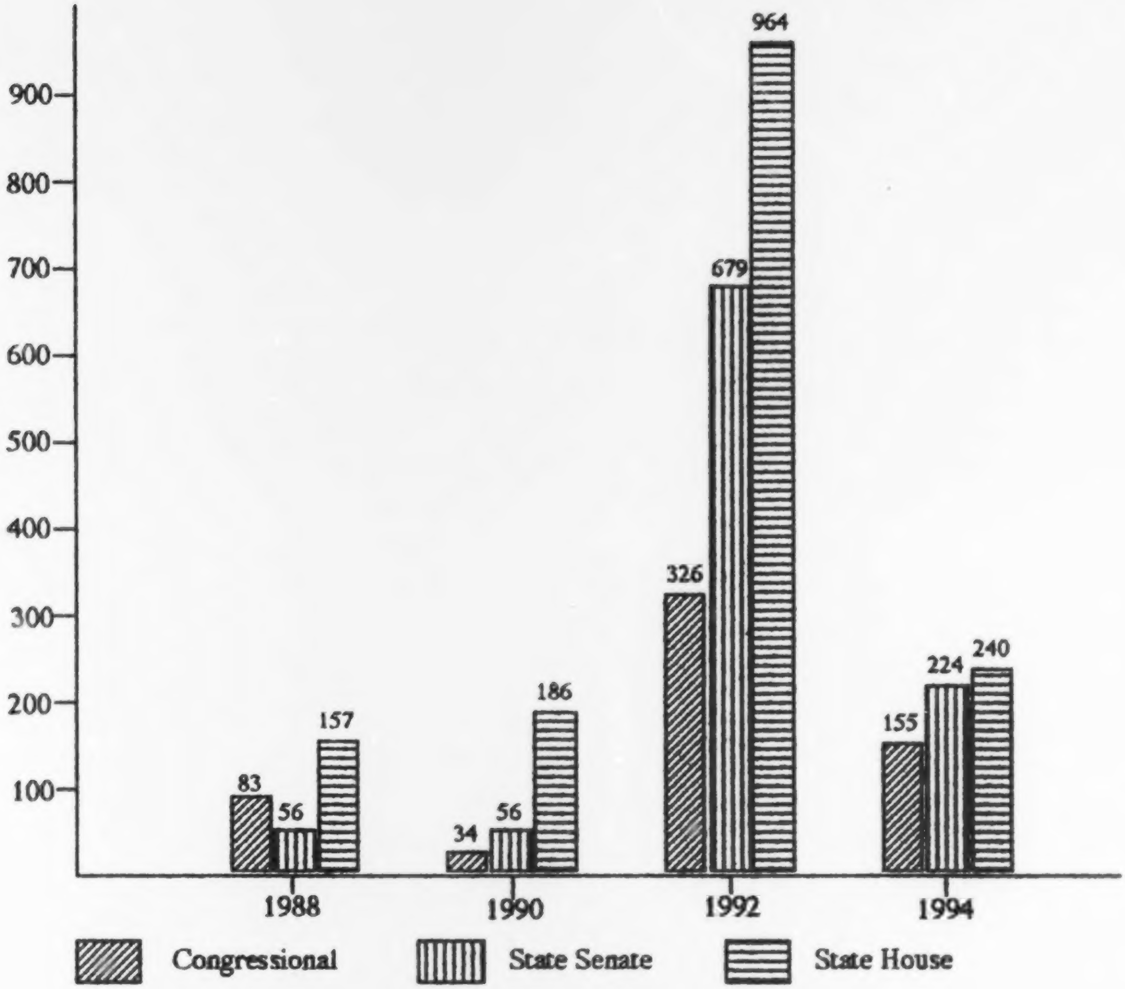

Figure 2: Number of paragraphs on Congressional and State Legislative races appearing in the *Daily Herald*.

Table 1: Crosstabulation of amount of *Tribune* coverage on congressional and State Legislative races by year. Cells show the number of paragraphs with column percentages in parentheses.

		1991 Tribune Bureau Introduced		
District Type	**1988**	**1990**	**1992**	**1994**
Congressional	1 (100)	13 (22)	167 (53)	51 (34)
State Senate	0	13 (22)	72 (23)	81 (53)
State House	0	34 (56)	77 (24)	20 (13)
Total	1 (100)	60 (100)	316 (100)	152 (100)

Pearson Chi-square: 82.96 $p < .01$

Table 2: Crosstabulation of amount of *Daily Herald* coverage on congressional and State Legislative races by year. Cells show the number of paragraphs with column percentages in parentheses.

		1991 Tribune Bureau Introduced		
District Type	**1988**	**1990**	**1992**	**1994**
Congressional	83 (28)	34 (12)	326 (17)	155 (25)
State Senate	56 (19)	56 (20)	679 (34)	224 (36)
State House	157 (53)	186 (68)	964 (49)	240 (39)
Total	296 (100)	276 (100)	1969 (100)	619 (100)

Pearson Chi-square: 105.41 $p < .01$

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Tables 3-10: Crosstabulation of *Tribune* and *Daily Herald* design characteristics by year. Cells show the amount of coverage (in paragraphs) accompanied by each design element. Column percentages are in parentheses.

Story accompanied by photograph

3. Tribune

			1991 Tribune Bureau Introduced	
Photograph	**1988**	**1990**	**1992**	**1994**
No	1 (100)	60 (100)	240 (76)	55 (36)
Yes	0	0	76 (24)	97 (64)
Total	1 (100)	60 (100)	316 (100)	152 (100)

Pearson Chi-square: 107.25 p < .01

4. Daily Herald

			1991 Tribune Bureau Introduced	
Photograph	**1988**	**1990**	**1992**	**1994**
No	64 (22)	184 (67)	1252 (64)	438 (52)
Yes	232 (78)	92 (33)	717 (36)	398 (48)
Total	296 (100)	276 (100)	1969 (100)	836 (100)

Pearson Chi-square: 204.02 p < .01

Story accompanied by graphic

5. Tribune

			1991 Tribune Bureau Introduced	
Graphic	**1988**	**1990**	**1992**	**1994**
No	1 (100)	29 (48)	79 (25)	47 (31)
Yes	0	31 (52)	237 (75)	105 (69)
Total	1 (100)	60 (100)	316 (100)	152 (100)

Pearson Chi-square: 15.85 p < .01

6. Daily Herald

			1991 Tribune Bureau Introduced	
Graphic	**1988**	**1990**	**1992**	**1994**
No	64 (22)	179 (65)	342 (17)	281 (34)
Yes	232 (78)	97 (35)	1627 (83)	555 (66)
Total	296 (100)	276 (100)	1969 (100)	836 (100)

Pearson Chi-square: 323.60 p < .01

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Location of story

7. Tribune

		1991 Tribune Bureau Introduced		
Location	**1988**	**1990**	**1992**	**1994**
Front Page	0	0	0	33 (22)
Inside Front Section	0	13 (22)	0	0
Front of 2nd Section	0	7 (12)	178 (56)	70 (46)
Inside 2nd Section	1 (100)	40 (67)	138 (44)	49 (32)
Total	1 (100)	60 (100)	316 (100)	152 (100)

Pearson Chi-square: 217.71 p < .01

8. Daily Herald

		1991 Tribune Bureau Introduced		
Location	**1988**	**1990**	**1992**	**1994**
Front Page	0	32 (12)	240 (12)	107 (13)
Inside Front Section	128 (43)	75 (27)	317 (16)	404 (48)
Front of 2nd Section	37 (13)	69 (25)	806 (41)	311 (37)
Inside 2nd Section	131 (44)	100 (36)	606 (31)	14 (2)
Total	296 (100)	276 (100)	1969 (100)	836 (100)

Pearson Chi-square: 621.36 p < .01

Lead story on section front

9. Tribune

		1991 Tribune Bureau Introduced		
Lead story	**1988**	**1990**	**1992**	**1994**
No	1 (100)	60 (100)	267 (84.5)	127 (84)
Yes	0	0	49 (15.5)	25 (16)
Total	1 (100)	60 (100)	316 (100)	152 (100)

Pearson Chi-square: 11.29 p < .05

10. Daily Herald

		1991 Tribune Bureau Introduced		
Lead story	**1988**	**1990**	**1992**	**1994**
No	284 (96)	227 (82)	1880 (95.5)	594 (71)
Yes	12 (4)	49 (18)	89 (4.5)	242 (29)
Total	296 (100)	276 (100)	1969 (100)	836 (100)

Pearson Chi-square: 368 p < .01

Table 11: Determinants of campaign coverage for the *Daily Herald*.

Independent Variables	**b**	**S.E. of b**	**Beta**
Umbrella Competition	33.29**	7.28	.38
Competitiveness of Race	- 136.87**	22.74	-.49
Open Seat	15.57	9.96	.13
Congressional Race	12.55	10.24	.10
State Senate Race	5.53	8.30	.05

R-square: .54
Adjusted R-square: .51
N = 82
*p < .05 **p < .001

Table 12: Determinants of campaign coverage for the *Chicago Tribune*.

Independent Variables	**b**	**S.E. of b**	**Beta**
Umbrella Competition	10.94*	4.44	.27
Competitiveness of Race	- 36.03*	13.73	-.28
Open Seat	- 8.98	6.07	-.17
Congressional Race	10.20	6.22	.18
State Senate Race	2.55	5.04	.05

R-square: .20
Adjusted R-square: .15
N = 82
*p < .05 **p < .001

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